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Wednesday, 20 October 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jayanama (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 11 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/54/2)

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I wish to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his succinct and balanced presentation of this year's report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. My delegation believes that the consideration of this report by the Assembly will provide an opportunity for the larger membership of the Organization to reflect upon and assess developments pertaining to international peace and security, as well as the work of the Council, during the period covered by the report.

My delegation welcomes the positive developments in the work of the Council, which reflect its increased transparency. These include the regular, sometimes daily briefings by the presidency, which are attended by an increasing number of non-members of the Council, and the increased frequency of open debates and open briefings, with the participation of non-members of the Council. At the same time, there is greater willingness on the part of the Council to engage in broader thematic debates that expand the Security Council's capacity to deal with current challenges to peace and security. These debates include items on, among others, the protection of civilians in armed conflict and protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations. It goes without saying that improving transparency in the work of the Council has enhanced the credibility of the Council vis-à-vis the general membership of the United Nations.

There have been serious discussions, both in the Council and in the Open-ended Working Group on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, on the need to improve further the effectiveness of the work of the Council. At the core of these discussions is the importance of enhancing the process of consultations between the Council and States that are directly involved in particular issues before the Council, as well as with other concerned parties. Clearly, enhanced consultations would serve two important purposes: receiving vital information and inputs from the concerned parties, as well as putting across the views and positions of the Council to these parties. Such interactions and exchanges would certainly contribute to improving the decision-making process of the Council.

My delegation and most, if not all elected members of the Council strongly believe in the need for the Council to obtain direct information from the parties concerned, including through their direct involvement in the discussions of the Council. My delegation supports the efforts to open up the informal consultations of the Council, in which much of the work of the Council takes

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place, to representatives of concerned States not members of the Council. The presence of ministers and other senior representatives of concerned parties in the informal consultations, as opposed to the more informal setting of the "Arria formula", would enrich the process of consultations and decision-making of the Council. While they should not replace the mechanism of bilateral consultations between States and Council members, which has its own purpose, such meetings between Council members and concerned non-members in informal consultation would open up a direct channel of communication and dialogue on important issues being considered by the Council.

Insofar as the "Arria formula" is concerned, my delegation would like to see this mechanism, which is a pragmatic and useful one, being used in accordance with its original concept, specifically to facilitate an informal exchange of views between Council members and individuals, organizations or institutions on issues being considered by the Council. The permanent representative of Venezuela, in his letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council dated 15 March 1999, clearly stated the rationale and purpose of the "Arria formula", named after one of his predecessors, which he said was intended for the purpose of obtaining

> "direct assessments from individuals, organizations or institutions that could ... contribute to a better understanding of the situation under consideration". (*A/53/865*)

This clearly shows that the formula was not intended for the purpose of receiving the representatives of sovereign States that are full members of the Organization in a meeting room away from the Council Chamber.

In addition to opening up the informal consultation process of the Council, my delegation would also support utilizing more frequently the mechanism of the so-called "private meetings" of the Council, in which the Council meets in closed formal sessions in its Chamber for an exchange of views with representatives of concerned States.

We believe that all of these are constructive proposals that would serve to open up the consultation process of the Council. Their adoption would go a long way towards not only making the Council more transparent and accessible to the larger membership of the United Nations, but also improving the decision-making process of the Council as it grapples with the complex and challenging issues of international peace and security.

My delegation, like those of other Members of the United Nations, is concerned at the paralysis of the Council on some important issues. In such situations, the Council loses its credibility and effectiveness to act, with serious implications for the maintenance of international peace and security. This is also a matter of concern to the Secretary-General who, in his remarks at the opening of the current session of the General Assembly, alluded to it in the context of the interesting but controversial concept of humanitarian intervention, which has prompted various reactions from Member States and will surely be the subject of further debates in the coming weeks and months. We have made some preliminary remarks on this concept and will deal with it in greater depth at the appropriate time.

It cannot be denied that much of the impasse in, and paralysis of, the Council has to do with one aspect of its decision-making process: the use or threat of use of the veto, the all-powerful weapon of the permanent members. That was at the core of the Council's inaction in the face of the Rwanda genocide and the Kosovo tragedy, which prompted the use of force without the authorization of the Council. Clearly, the issue of the veto will have to be seriously addressed by the membership of the Organization, including the permanent members themselves, and ways found to circumscribe it, or at least manage it better, if the Council is to function effectively so as to avoid future Rwandas and Kosovos.

Invoking Charter rights alone in defence of the veto is not helpful, as the Charter provides not only rights, but also obligations and responsibilities. It is to be hoped that some creative way of managing the veto in the context of our times will be found and supported by the permanent members, in their enlightened self-interest and in the interest of the international community as a whole. In the face of many complex challenges ahead, the issue of the Council's efficiency will have to be addressed as a matter of urgency if we are to avoid a crisis of unmanageable proportions in the Council.

Another issue of concern to my delegation relates to the use of sanctions. While it is a recognized instrument of coercion provided for in the Charter, as a measure of last resort when all peaceful means have failed, sanctions should be imposed only after a careful analysis of their likely impact has been made. This is to ensure that the sanctions to be imposed would have the desired impact only on the target or targets of the sanctions, and not on the general population. My delegation is supportive of the ongoing discussions in the Council to consider ways and

means for the effective implementation and management of current sanctions regimes, which will also serve as useful guidelines for future sanctions regimes that the Council may decide to impose, when absolutely necessary.

My delegation is particularly concerned with the debilitating effects of comprehensive sanctions, such as those imposed on Iraq, which have very serious humanitarian consequences for the ordinary people of Iraq. We have stated on several occasions that the international community and the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, bear a heavy responsibility to ameliorate the sufferings of the Iraqi people, even as they address the important issues of peace and security in the region and the other important outstanding issues from the Gulf War. We consider it important and necessary that countries affected by sanctions be given a fair hearing by the Council. We would encourage chairmen of the sanctions committees to visit the targeted countries to evaluate the situation on the ground, whenever appropriate. We would also urge the Council to formally lift sanctions as soon as they are no longer necessary or legally required, as, for instance, in the case of Libya. Like all powerful weapons, sanctions should be utilized with extreme care so as to avoid inflicting damage on unintended targets, which, regrettably, often happens.

On the issue of peacekeeping, the Organization has clearly benefited tremendously from the experiences and lessons learned from past missions. As a troop-contributing country, Malaysia is pleased with the increased and regular interaction with the Council on peacekeeping missions in which we are involved. This contributes to better coordination and decision-making on the deployment of personnel and related matters. A continuing matter of concern for some years, of course, relates to the issue of delayed reimbursements of peacekeeping costs. Unless the situation is improved in the near future, it will certainly affect the capacity and willingness of developing countries to contribute troops to future United Nations peacekeeping missions.

It is equally important for peacekeeping missions to be established expeditiously in response to crisis situations, following the establishment of their appropriate mandates by the Council. In this regard, there is concern that deliberations in the Council are sometimes stymied by narrow and short-term budgetary approaches. This will inadvertently weaken the Council's authority and often also that of the Secretary-General in the planning and implementation of such operations. It sends a wrong message of a lack of real concern on the part of the Council to the affected parties, and runs the risk of the Council being perceived as being selective in its responses to various conflict situations. As the Council considers a number of peacekeeping operations in Africa, it is important to address this issue so as to dispel such perceptions.

The central and critical role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security is well spelled out in the Charter of the United Nations. However, in carrying out its work, the consistent support of the international community is vital to ensure the legitimacy of its decisions in the eyes of the larger membership of the Organization that are not privy to the deliberations of the Council. My delegation, therefore, warmly commends this report, as it contributes to increased understanding of, and support for, the work of the Council. It also provides an opportunity for vital feedback from Member States. As improving the Council's working methods is an ongoing process, my delegation looks forward to improved reporting of the work of the Council to the General Assembly, including, whenever possible, the submission of special reports, as provided for in the Charter.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to extend our warmest congratulations to the five newly elected non-permanent members of the Council. We look forward to working closely with them in the Council when they take their seats next year.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly is again taking up a report of the Security Council, submitted in accordance with Article 24, paragraph 3, and Article 15, paragraph 1, of the Charter. We would like to thank the Council and its President for this report.

During our consideration of last year's report of the Security Council, my delegation noted with interest the improvements made to it, particularly the inclusion of information about the work of its subsidiary bodies, including the sanctions committees, and the introduction of information about documentation, the sanctions committee and the Council's working methods. My delegation also expressed its appreciation of the new practice adopted by the Council of publishing, as an addendum, brief summaries of the Council's work, provided by former Presidents of the Council. Even if they do not reflect the Council's views, at least they provide supplementary information about the Council's work, in particular about the informal meetings and the

statements made to the press. Member States now have a somewhat clearer idea of the work of this important body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Despite these improvements to the report, in our opinion it is still in general insufficiently analytical and informative, particularly about the informal deliberations and consultations, which are not open to United Nations Members that are not on the Council. My country believes that for it to be a real tool for positive interaction between the two principal organs of the United Nations — the Security Council and the General Assembly — the report should be more analytical about the Council's work on all the items of which it is seized, in order to reflect the transparency that is sought.

My delegation hopes that the Security Council will continue to consider ways to improve its working methods and procedures, including by submitting the special reports referred to in paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the Charter.

My delegation would like to see increased transparency in the Council's work, and it will work to that end in the Council when it takes a seat as a non-permanent member in January 2000. My delegation also hopes that the discussions in the General Assembly Working Group on increasing the Council's membership and improving its working methods will come to a successful conclusion as soon as possible so as to enhance the Council's representativity.

An examination of the report shows the prominent place occupied by African questions on the Council's agenda — in particular, the discussions on the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict in Africa, as well as the work of the Council relating to the situation in certain African countries. We wish to stress the importance that should be attached to improving Africa's peacekeeping capacity, in coordination between the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.

The latest report of the Security Council also highlights the ongoing importance of peacekeeping operations, which requires that the Organization's peacekeeping capacities be constantly improved and refined. This work includes complete implementation of the United Nations standby forces arrangements, to which my country has had the honour of adhering since June 1999, when it placed some resources at the disposal of the Organization.

With regard to general questions not related to a specific country or conflict — humanitarian matters, the protection of civilians during conflicts, the protection of children, international terrorism and so forth — my delegation wishes to stress the importance of maintaining an interactive dialogue between the Security Council and the General Assembly and of respect for the mandates and prerogatives of each of the principal organs of the United Nations.

Before concluding, I wish briefly to refer to the question of the imposition of sanctions by the Security Council as one of the instruments for the maintenance of international peace and security. In this connection, I wish to reiterate the importance we attach to a certain number of parameters which are generally recognized by the international community and which we think should be constantly taken into account during the imposition of sanctions: that they should be used as a last resort; that their scope and duration should be limited; that their impact on civilian populations should be eased; and, finally, that they should take into account the interests of third countries, in accordance with Article 50 of the Charter.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): The Security Council is presenting its annual report for the fifty-fourth time. This comprehensive, long document bears witness to the manifold activities of the Security Council during the period under review. The report reflects the enormous workload, which has again increased compared with the previous year. All members of the Security Council deserve our respect and gratitude for shouldering this burden in exercising the duties conferred upon them by Member States, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. It is worthwhile to recall at this stage that the Security Council, in carrying out these duties, is indeed acting on behalf of all of us, the Member States.

The statistics indicate that the tendency to meet behind closed doors is continuing. Informal consultations have taken place nearly twice as often as open meetings. This development, in our view, deserves close attention. There are understandable reasons why the Security Council needs to come together from time to time in a confidential format to allow substantial and in-depth discussions. I would also like to specifically recognize the willingness to cooperate and to provide information on the part of the Security Council members vis-à-vis the non-members.

However, there is a fundamental question of how to include involved parties prior to the actual consultations and how to enable third parties with vital interests to participate in informal Security Council meetings. In this connection, I would like to point to the laudable work of the Council's informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions. These efforts to improve the working methods of the Council complement the ongoing Cluster-II deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, and should be strongly encouraged to continue.

This raises some admittedly difficult questions. For example: how can practical procedures be found which take into account the need of involved parties to be informed, and, at the same time, the occasional need of the Security Council to proceed confidentially? Which types of procedures would be flexible enough to be available in individual cases and yet not appear arbitrary?

However, the question of access should not be looked at from procedural or legal points of view only. The broader the base of the Security Council deliberations — that is, the more countries with a just cause or vital interest to be heard will participate in the discussions — the stronger could be the democratic legitimization of the Council's decisions and resolutions in a world of increasing conflicts.

Rather, the Council should consider, in a pragmatic way, more transparent procedures, and decide whenever possible on a more open format. And — what is important — no article of the Charter needs to be changed or amended. The Security Council is, as we all know, the master of its own procedure. That means that this boils down to a matter of political will.

It may be worthwhile recalling that reform does not consist of papers and statistics. A reference book including statistics and documents may be quite useful for technical reasons. It is a kind of accounting on the part of the Security Council before the General Assembly. However, it is not enough to merely present an industrious, labour-intensive report on the Council's activities. There is, unfortunately, no mention of the challenges the Security Council is facing, let alone of its difficulties in mastering these challenges.

The crises and conflicts in the world have not become fewer. This year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization describes, *inter alia,* the many questions and problems that remain and to which the Security Council has not yet found satisfactory answers and solutions.

Under paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter, Member States have conferred on the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security

> "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations".

Permit me to ask: Is the Security Council up to this task, considering its present composition and working methods?

In many ways the Kosovo conflict represents a turning point. I do not want to try to add new arguments to the focal issue of humanitarian intervention. The tension that exists between the sovereignty of States and the universal applicability of human rights was addressed in a well balanced manner by the Secretary-General in his contribution to the general debate. But in order to avoid a Kosovo-type intervention in the future, we have to finally carry out the long overdue substantial reform of the Security Council. The Council must be adapted to the new realities. It must, above all, be equipped adequately to react to the crises and conflicts of today in a legitimate manner, truly on behalf of the Member States of the United Nations.

I would like to recall the address of German Foreign Minister Fischer at this session and the very concrete ideas he laid out in his speech. He said of the Council:

> "Reform must involve enlargement to include both more permanent and non-permanent members, as well as a strengthening of its decision-making powers..."

In the debate on reform we must not avoid the issue of the permanent members' right of veto, a question of key importance for the Security Council's capability to act.

> "... The introduction of an obligation for a State to explain to the General Assembly why it is vetoing a draft resolution would make it more difficult to do so and thus bring about substantial progress towards using the right of veto more responsibly. Why should not the General Assembly assume more responsibility in future, too?" (*A/54/PV.8, p. 12*)

We have to realize that without reform of the Security Council and its working methods, the legitimacy of the Council and its actions runs the risk of erosion and so will, ultimately, the entire United Nations system.

What we want is a significant, far-reaching and visionary reform of the United Nations and its Security Council to master the problems of the next century.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I wish to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, for his concise presentation of the Council's report to the General Assembly. As an elected member of the Council, we believe that efforts should continue to be made to ensure that consideration of the report is not a mere formality. It should be the basis for enhanced transparency and accountability by the Security Council. In this regard, and bearing in mind the current discussions on procedure and working methods of the Security Council, Brazil advocates the adoption of practices that bring the work of the Security Council closer to the general membership. Holding more frequent private meetings may be a good way forward. However, other constructive ideas presently under consideration by the Working Group on procedure and documentation should be pursued.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the newly-elected members of the Council: Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine. My delegation is sure that they are attuned to the expectations of the broad majority of the membership that elected them, and will therefore endeavour to make a significant contribution to international peace and security.

This has again been a very busy year for the Security Council. Unfortunately, this is not a cause for rejoicing. On the contrary, it is an eloquent sign that the international community has not been able to establish the peaceful, stable, just and prosperous society envisaged by the drafters of the Charter. The end of the millennium has not brought with it the end of the horrors of wars and genocide. Massive killings, forced displacements, widespread destruction and looting and other forms of violence have become sad reminders of the dark side of the twentieth century.

During the period June 1998 to June 1999, we witnessed the outbreak, persistence or deterioration of conflict situations in almost every continent. The challenge of dealing effectively with the international consequences of internal conflicts has been on the agenda of the Security Council daily. New crises have emerged in Africa, whereas long-term conflicts — such as the 24-year civil war in Angola — still persist. The duration and complexity of conflicts in the African continent deserve urgent and consistent attention by the Security Council.

Stability in the Balkans is yet to be achieved. The situation in Kosovo represents a daunting challenge for the international community. The Middle East remains an area of grave concern. The Council is still paralysed in dealing with the Iraq question. Asia continues to live under the shadow of nuclear tests, and more recently has faced the upsurge of violence in East Timor. In the midst of this turmoil, more than 21 million people — considered to be "of concern" by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees — wander, without hope. Theirs is a distressing and real aspect of our times.

While the overall picture is worrisome, the Security Council has been capable of addressing some of these questions, within the limits of its responsibilities. We would like to stress recent developments: in the Central African Republic, where the recent presidential and legislative elections were held in a fair and orderly fashion; in Guinea-Bissau, which is preparing for elections, scheduled for 28 November; in Sierra Leone, where a peacekeeping operation will soon be deployed to help consolidate the peace process; and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where prospects for peace have improved after the ceasefire agreement of Lusaka.

The Security Council is also preparing to engage in the complex task of administering East Timor's transition to independence. The importance of the free exercise by the East Timorese people of their right to self-determination should not be underestimated. Brazil follows very closely the situation in East Timor, with which we share a common language and cultural heritage. The future state of East Timor will bear testimony to the many lines of action open to the international community within the framework of the Charter — the leadership exercised by the Secretary-General when political conditions in Indonesia offered a window of opportunity; the full backing of the Security Council at all stages of the process; the use of various diplomatic tools, in particular the innovative approach of a Security Council mission; the recognition that a "coalition of the willing" was the best option, in that particular circumstance; the mandate given by the Security Council to the multinational force; and the proposed transition to a United Nations peacekeeping operation, in the full sense of the term, which we all

hope will take place soon. The legal basis for all these actions is provided by the United Nations Charter, whose full potential is yet to be explored.

Another good example of the many avenues offered by the United Nations Charter is Haiti. In our comments under this same item last year, we referred to Haiti as the one remaining item on the Council's agenda that dealt with a country in our region. We are glad to be able to do so today from a different perspective. In accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1212 (1998), the question of Haiti was addressed by the Economic and Social Council at its last substantive session. Resolution 1999/11 of the Economic and Social Council requests the Secretary-General to develop a long-term strategy and programme of support for Haiti. It could be argued that the case of Haiti has set a useful precedent by focusing post-conflict peace-building actions on the economic and social constraints underlying most political crises in the developing world.

During the period in question, we have also witnessed a number of attempts to sideline the Security Council when it comes to maintaining peace and security. The Secretary-General himself, speaking at The Hague on the occasion of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference, identified what he called a regrettable tendency for the Security Council not to be involved in efforts to maintain peace and security. Brazil deplores all instances in which enforcement action has been decided upon irrespective of Security Council authorization. Whenever this occurs, the very foundations of international law are shaken. The alternative to the legitimacy provided by the United Nations Charter is an unstable order where might prevails over right.

Looking at the bright side of the twentieth century, we see signs of increasing convergence around a fundamental group of values. Tolerance, democracy, humanitarian principles, human rights and sustainable development are at the core of our aspirations for a world system whose stability is founded on justice and not force. Our challenge now is to transform this moral framework into institutions that can act as the very foundations of international society. Again, the alternative is to give way to war-making potential as the principal structuring force in society.

Mr. Monagas-Lesseur (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Sergey Lavrov for introducing the report of the Security Council for the period June 1998 to June 1999 in his capacity as President of the Council for the month of October.

Venezuela follows with the greatest interest the development of the substantive work of the Security Council in the exercise of its responsibilities, as well as the evolution of its work regarding its procedures and the transparency of its activities.

With regard to its substantive work, Venezuela reaffirms its support for the Security Council as the body with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We are pleased to note the important work accomplished during the year under consideration, which has made it possible for the Organization to consistently monitor many conflict situations and to use its prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building capacities.

Seen from the standpoint of both the number of peacekeeping operations and their complexity, these activities also underscore the appropriateness of widening the discussions regarding the expansion and reform of the Council. In the same measure as the Council is increasingly making pronouncements and decisions of a binding nature, we also see an increased need for the Council to strengthen its legitimacy through a presence of Member States within it that is consistent with the new realities of Organization.

We also note with appreciation the Council's increased interest in matters related to armed conflicts whose gravity requires the attention of the international community. These include the issues of children in conflict, protection for those providing assistance to refugees, civilians in armed conflict and the threat of terrorist acts. The United Nations is called upon to enact preventive measures regarding these issues. The contribution of the Council can and must be backed up by the General Assembly in the search for general and stable solutions to these problems.

With regard to peacekeeping operations themselves, Venezuela supports the trend seen in the last year towards greater cooperation with regional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. Just as we cannot fail to share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization about those situations in which the Council was not able to act and delegated its responsibilities, thereby creating a precedent that only weakens the legal foundations of the collective security system, we also

wish to affirm that we attach importance to the Councils' keeping situations under review until the expected results are achieved and peace is restored.

Regarding the transparency of the work of the Council, Venezuela is following with heightened interest the improvements made in its working methods. We support in particular the practice of holding consultations with troop-contributing countries, the oral reports given by the President and the holding of open meetings on matters of general interest. We especially commend the initiative of dealing *in extenso* with conflict situations in Africa during the period covered by the report before us.

A matter of particular relevance that we would like to see carried further is the transparency of the work and reporting of the subsidiary bodies, in particular the sanctions committees. We are confident that improvements can be made in this regard in order to have an objective assessment of the scope and consequences of existing sanctions regimes.

Finally, we would like to reiterate the importance of the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the reform and expansion of the Security Council. We appeal to the Council to continue its efforts to improve the transparency of its work and its working methods, including improvements related to the presentation of its report to the General Assembly.

Mr. Li Hyong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Since the Security Council is facing ever-increasing new challenges and the current session is the last one of the twentieth century, we believe it would be most appropriate for the deliberation of the agenda item now before us to be seized as an opportunity to review comprehensively and in the light of the United Nations Charter all aspects of the Security Council's activities in the course of the last half century.

Let me now present some views on the report of the Security Council.

We certainly take note, as we did last year, of some improvements in the format of the report, such as the inclusion of, among other things, brief descriptions of every informal consultation of the whole and monthly assessments of the work of the Security Council by former Presidents, in accordance with the measures approved by the Security Council in June 1997. We note in particular that the continued inclusion of monthly assessments in the form of an addendum to the report, although limited in their content, has to some extent contributed to improving the quality of the report and thus has helped the Member States understand instantly the activities of the Security Council during the period under review.

Despite these improvements, we regret to say that the Report is still of a procedural nature. For example, 80 per cent of the Security Council's activities are conducted through informal consultations. Hence, it would be logical that the report should contain detailed and analytical information on informal consultations of the whole.

However, the present report's descriptions of the informal consultations consist of only one or two paragraphs on the dates and proceedings of those consultations. There is no information on the process of deliberations, including the views of Security Council members on specific issues debated in the Council.

Since the concept of informal consultations is not specified either in the United Nations Charter or in the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the continuation of that process cannot be considered normal. Moreover, excluding the parties concerned from informal consultations and failing to describe their proceedings in detail runs counter to the demand of the majority of Member States to ensure transparency in Security Council activities.

As our debates so far have clearly proved, the first priority in ensuring transparency in Security Council activities is to make the Security Council discuss all substantive issues in public while confining its informal consultations to those of a procedural nature.

Furthermore, the parties concerned should be invited to participate in informal consultations as well as in formal meetings of the Security Council, in accordance with Articles 31 and 32 of the United Nations Charter, so that their views are duly reflected in the process of deliberations of the Security Council.

Let me also touch upon some of the challenges facing the Security Council at the threshold of the new millennium.

Although more than half a century has elapsed since the Security Council started its work in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security, it is regrettable that the Council persists in taking actions that

disregard the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and violate its mandate.

In 1950, in the early years after the inception of the United Nations, a certain arbitrariness existed that led to the adoption, at Security Council meetings where all not all permanent members were represented, of resolutions authorizing the use of force. The leftover effects of those actions are still used to exploit the United Nations.

More recently, at the close of the twentieth century, the world has witnessed other arbitrary acts, such as the use of military force against sovereign States without a clear mandate from the Security Council, or even bypassing the United Nations.

Bypassing the United Nations in the use of force constitutes a serious violation of the United Nations Charter and commonly recognized international law, since this is tantamount to giving up on the commitment to confer on the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and the commitment to respect the sovereign rights of Member States.

If the principle of respect for sovereignty is disregarded in relations among countries, confrontations will inevitably occur between States trying to defend their sovereignty and forces attempting to infringe upon the sovereignty of other States, and, consequently, this world will never be stable.

In order for the United Nations to make a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the building of the peaceful world to which humankind aspires, first, the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual equality stipulated in the United Nations Charter and international law should be strictly observed.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Sovereignty is the lifeline of every country. Non-intervention in the internal affairs of others and mutual equality are fundamental principles that should never be violated on any account.

Secondly, the Security Council should not take measures that might infringe upon the sovereignty of Member States. Infringing on the sovereignty of States and intervening in their internal affairs should not be allowed.

Thirdly, in order for Security Council resolutions to be effectively implemented, a system should be established that would empower the General Assembly to endorse Security Council resolutions concerning crucial issues such as the use of force and economic sanctions.

Lastly, the Security Council should review the implementation of all resolutions adopted in the past and eliminate what is left over from the cold-war era by taking courageous steps to correct those that contravene the United Nations Charter and are inconsistent with present times.

In this regard, I take this opportunity to remind all present here that around 40,000 United States troops stationed in South Korea are pretending to be United Nations forces by exploiting the United Nations flag and helmets.

In conclusion, it is my delegation's hope that the constructive proposals suggested with regard to Security Council activities will be given serious consideration during the Millennium Assembly and Summit, to be held next year.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey the congratulations of my delegation to Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, who, as President of the Security Council for the month of October, has submitted to us the annual report of the Council, in keeping with Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the members of the Council for the high quality, relevance and balance of the report, which accurately reflect their commitment and their devotion to international peace and security, an area for which the Security Council has primary responsibility.

As is clear from the report, the Council, once again, has had a very busy year because of the many upheavals throughout the world and the frequent threats to international peace and security. The report represents the sum of the efforts made by Council members and by the Secretariat, and it is also an important stage in making the work of the Council more open and more transparent.

Progress has been made in recent years with respect to the need for greater transparency in the work of the Security Council, and we appreciate the well-established practice of making available information to non-members

of the Council. My delegation welcomes the holding of open debates on various items on the Council's agenda as well as the initiatives taken by Presidents to organize public meetings on specific issues of concern to the entire international community.

Each President tries, during his monthly term of office, to organize a debate on a major theme. This is a welcome innovation, and we cannot but support this trend very strongly.

Member States were thus able to express their views on important issues such as threats to peace and security caused by international terrorist acts; protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others affected by conflict situations; the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building; protection of civilians in armed conflict; the question of child soldiers; and the problem of displaced persons.

The report of the Security Council also gives a prominent place to the crises convulsing Africa, the continent that currently has more conflicts on the agenda of the Council than any other, including those in Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

Since the issuance in April 1998 of the Secretary-General's report on conflict in Africa, the instability in the continent has prompted the Council, in the course of several meetings, to consider the crises that have convulsed Africa, as well as the proposals of the ad hoc Working Group set up to consider the recommendations contained in that report. That Working Group, which is chaired by the Ambassador of Gabon, to whom I convey fraternal congratulations, submitted its conclusions to the Security Council, which adopted them unanimously in the form of resolutions and presidential statements during September and November 1998.

In those various decisions, the Security Council defined the principles for assuring and safeguarding peace and advocated several different means and mechanisms for doing so, such as arms embargoes, cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity with regard to Africa's peacekeeping capacity, security in refugee camps, illicit arms trafficking and the strengthening of peace through the efforts of regional organizations. My delegation welcomes the laudable efforts made by the Council to contain those conflicts, because without peace there can be no development in Africa.

We must remain vigilant and remember, as African leaders have repeatedly emphasized from this rostrum, that Africa needs real action to be taken, not fine-sounding declarations and resolutions. The importance that the international community attaches to Africa will be measured by concrete, positive action.

In a number of African crises, the hesitation of the Security Council and, too often, its failure to act, have led to great frustration on the part of African States. In the interests of peace and the development of the continent, the Security Council should first and foremost support the efforts of Africans to strengthen their peacekeeping capacity so that they are able to confront such crisis situations.

We have also observed too great a tendency on the part of the members of the Council to allow situations to deteriorate to the point of causing great loss of life and, often, large-scale humanitarian disaster. The attention that certain members of the council have said that they will now pay to African problems — after the lessons of Kosovo and East Timor — will be measured by their ability to anticipate unfortunate events in Africa and to take adequate preventive action. Members of the Security Council have too great a tendency to react belatedly to crises, whereas, when confronted with tragic situations in Africa, they should act quickly, before it is too late. We have even observed that, in contrast to similar humanitarian situations occurring outside the continent, responses to situations in Africa have often been delayed to such an extent that we sometimes wonder whether people in distress in Africa are treated on an equal footing with people in other parts of the world.

In order to prevent the Security Council's failure to act when confronted with such situations from having the serious consequence of gravely damaging the credibility and authority of that central body, there must be an improvement in the way in which it functions. In this context, I wish to emphasize and welcome the broad consensus that already exists with regard to some essential issues, including the participation of non-members in Council meetings, the programme of work of the Council and the briefings arranged by the President of the Council for non-members and troop contributors.

We must go further, and turn this impetus into true progress by institutionalizing it so that international peace and security in the next century can be upheld by a revitalized, more effective and more transparent Security Council. To that end, we must stop this deplorable trend

of sidelining the Security Council. Indeed, for some time, Member States and regional organizations have been taking coercive measures without the authorization of the Council, or have been acting unilaterally in the name of the right to intervene on humanitarian grounds. The support that regional organizations can provide in conflict prevention or peacekeeping should never absolve the Council of its overriding responsibility for the promotion of peace and collective security.

We must therefore discourage this trend by emphasizing the areas of competence defined by the Charter so that at the dawn of the new millennium we will have a Security Council that is in step with our changing world, one that respects the sovereignty of States and can demonstrate imagination and determination in protecting human rights and safeguarding peace throughout the world.

Mr. Onyia (Nigeria): It is an honour and, indeed, a delight for me to echo the very warm congratulations which my President extended to Mr. Gurirab, the President of the General Assembly, when he addressed the Assembly last month. Mr. Gurirab's outstanding leadership is already radiating through the deliberations of the fifty-fourth session, and the Nigerian delegation assures him of its continuous support.

We thank Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation — the current President of the Council — for introducing the report this morning. May I also express our gratitude to the Secretariat for its effort in producing the comprehensive report.

This agenda item provides us with ample opportunity to examine the many activities of the Security Council, the principal organ charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, during the period under review. This debate is of crucial importance because it is the last deliberation on this issue in this century. Indeed, the activities of the Security Council deserve our special attention as we are at the dawn of the new millennium.

We would like to commend the Security Council for its significant achievements in the resolution of conflicts in various regions of the world, especially since the end of the cold war. In Africa, the efforts of the Security Council were particularly important for the independence of Namibia, the successful dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the end of conflict in Mozambique and support for the peacemaking efforts in Liberia of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Notwithstanding those important achievements, there are still other areas where the Security Council needs to demonstrate greater commitment and decisiveness in resolving conflicts afflicting some States in Africa, as has been done in other regions.

As the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318) has manifestly shown, the root causes of conflict in Africa are varied and complex. Contemporary conflict situations in our continent reveal that they arise from multifarious factors that relate to poverty and socio-economic imbalances in society. It is against this background that we welcome the meetings of the Security Council at ministerial level on the situation in Africa. It is clear from those meetings that lasting solutions to conflict situations in Africa require far-reaching initiatives and solutions which link peace, security, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law on the one hand to sustainable development on the other.

The role of ECOWAS in restoring peace in Liberia and in Sierra Leone is indicative of the important contribution that a subregional organization can make to international peace and security. The success of ECOMOG confirms that such regional initiatives, where they exist, stand a good chance of success if their peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts are adequately and promptly supported by the Security Council. This success, however, has come at a tremendous cost to the States of the subregion, particularly my country. Our experience reinforces our belief that ECOWAS has evolved a unique mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Regrettably, there is a general perception that a uniform standard is lacking in responding to the outbreak of conflicts in all parts of the world. The Security Council has been slow to respond to the outbreak of conflicts in our continent — and where it has responded on time, it has not shown adequate commitment in terms of the measures and resources it has authorized to address these problems.

Peace is indivisible. We therefore urge the Security Council to place conflicts in Africa on the same footing as those in other regions, because the consequences of inaction can be very catastrophic, as has been amply demonstrated in Rwanda.

One of the critical challenges facing the United Nations as we approach the new millennium is the reform and democratization of the Security Council. In this regard, we reiterate the necessity of urgent reform of the Council and its working methods in order to enhance the Council's transparency, legitimacy and effectiveness. Nigeria has consistently maintained that the present situation, in which Africa, with 53 States Members of the United Nations, has no permanent seat on the Security Council, is unacceptable. In addition, such reform must result in enhancing not only cooperation between the Security Council and the General Assembly, but also its effectiveness.

While it is true that conflicts in Africa result from prevailing political and socio-cultural conditions, it is equally true that so long as Africa is not fully integrated into the global economic system, and so long as its people continue to be ravaged by poverty, disease and an unsustainable debt burden, genuine peace and security will remain an illusion on the continent. Nigeria, therefore, urges the United Nations to adopt a more holistic strategy in its plans to enhance conflict prevention and management, and to ensure rapid economic development, which are necessary conditions for stability, growth and sustainable development.

Let me use this opportunity to congratulate the non-permanent members of the Council elected for the period 2000-2001, namely Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Nigeria's commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, and to assure the Assembly that my country will spare no effort in the pursuit of global peace and security.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first of all to thank Ambassador Sergey V. Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and President of the Security Council for the month of October, for introducing the report of the Council to the General Assembly. My delegation is particularly pleased that the experiment begun some years ago by Brazil is now a regular practice at the outset of the General Assembly's consideration of this agenda item.

The report of the Security Council for the period 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999, which is before the Assembly today, contains a chronology of the formal activities of the Council and a compilation of resolutions adopted and presidential statements issued during the reporting period. It constitutes a valuable reference tool for librarians and archivists. In a concise and orderly format, it contains references to documentation, resolutions, statements and agenda items considered by the Council during the reporting period.

In spite of each year's improvements in the way the report is set out, my delegation believes that much remains to be done for the information in the report to meet completely the Council's obligation to submit a complete and appropriate report on its activities to the other Members of the United Nations.

I want to reaffirm once again that, rather than a compilation and a chronological account, we would be interested in an analysis of what took place during the Council's deliberations and an explanation of the reasoning behind its decisions. This is not a trivial matter; it is part of the Council's duty to report to the General Assembly.

Rule 48 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure clearly states that, unless it decides otherwise, the Council shall meet in public. But custom has turned the exception to that rule into a general practice. With increasing frequency, the Council meets behind closed doors in informal consultations, a format which is certainly not envisioned in the provisional rules of procedure.

For the period covered by the report before us, out of a total of 360 meetings, only 121 were held publicly, whereas 239 — almost twice as many — were held in private. Public meetings constitute the only opportunity that we 173 countries not on the Security Council have to be heard in an organ which, by provision of the Charter itself, is to act on behalf of us all. The private, informal consultations, supposedly designed to deal with questions of procedure, are now the forum in which the real substantive work of the Council is carried out. For that reason, it is inexplicable that no information is included about those private meetings, which according to the report itself represented approximately 511 work hours for the Council.

Under the terms of the Charter, it is important for the General Assembly to know the substance of the consultations in which the Council debates and prepares decisions which subsequently must be accepted and implemented by all States Members of the United Nations, who have delegated to that organ the responsibility of maintaining international peace and

security. From us it receives its mandate, and to us it must respond. The process of accountability is part of any process that is in any way democratic.

The silence of the report regarding the case of Kosovo is eloquent. That conflict held the attention of our Governments and of public opinion for a large part of this year. We all know what happened in the public meetings of the Council. What we do not know is what led to the total marginalization of the Council in the handling of the conflict. The substantive deliberations were conducted not only behind closed doors, but were also limited, in absolute secrecy, to the inner circle of the five permanent members. It is incomprehensible to my delegation that the report does not contain an analytical account of the reasons why the Council abdicated in favour of a military alliance to which three of its five permanent members belong, an action contrary to the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

We urge the members of the Security Council to conduct their substantive work in public. This is not some generous concession they would be making to the other Members of the United Nations; rather it is a matter of complying fully not only with their own rules but with the ethical imperative of legitimacy.

We will not embark here on an analysis of the working methods of the Council, nor will we refer to the anachronistic privileges enjoyed by some of its members. This is under consideration in the open-ended working group of the General Assembly on Security Council reform. We will confine ourselves to pointing out that the lack of transparency and the extreme inequalities that prevail in the Council have made it, instead of a protagonist and advocate in the search for solutions for international conflicts, rather a politically correct observer of the exercise of global power.

As Article 24 of the Charter indicates, the Security Council is an organ conceived and designed to "ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations". Its powers refer specifically to the maintenance of international peace and security. Its responsibility consists of taking the necessary measures in a timely way to avoid the worsening of situations of conflict. If we make an analogy with the structure of a State, the Security Council is a form of the executive branch.

The Security Council is not a deliberative body and it lacks the power to enact provisions of a normative nature that are generally applicable. That is the purview of the General Assembly, the most representative organ of the international community, whose broad competence allows it to "discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter", as Article 10 provides; it "may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security", or "discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security", as established in Article 11. In fact, it can discuss any other issue as stipulated by Article 13. If action is required in the framework of the General Assembly's competence, then the Security Council will intervene.

The division of responsibility is clear: if we compare the Security Council to a limited form of executive power, that is, an action-oriented organ, then the General Assembly is the legislative authority, the organ for deliberation and the establishment of general norms.

My delegation is concerned by the trend in the Council in recent years toward making declarations of a general nature on issues of collective concern in an attempt to provide automatic legitimacy for its own actions. Let us respect the respective competence of each of the principal organs of the United Nations. It is up to the Assembly to deliberate and to establish norms and principles regarding contemporary problems. It is up to the Security Council to act in case of crisis and, above all, on a case by case basis.

The Mexican delegation reiterates that access to information is a right of all Members of the United Nations and not a privilege, as some would seem to believe. It is the obligation of the members of the Security Council to keep others appropriately informed of the matters that the Council examines and on the reasons why the Council members make their decisions. We invite the Council, particularly its five permanent members, to join in the irreversible process toward openness, transparency and reform of the working methods of the Security Council, to which my country is completely committed, as are the immense majority of Member States of the United Nations.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes this opportunity to discuss the work of the Security Council with the all the Members of the United Nations. The opportunities for dialogue between the Council and those to whom it is accountable are too rare. To Canada, as an elected member of the Council, such accountability seems obvious. We argued for it during our campaign, and in the Council we are promoting the

applicability of the concepts of responsibility and accountability. Our position has always been based not only on the inherent merit of a more open, transparent and responsive Council, but also on practical considerations of effectiveness. The Council can only benefit from greater interaction with those who must ultimately give effect to its decisions.

The sheer size of the report before us underlines the unprecedented volume of Council activity. The impressive number of security issues of which the Council is seized — albeit a reminder of the number of conflicts raging throughout the world — demonstrates, nevertheless, the welcome activism of the Council since the end of the cold war. We also note with satisfaction the increase in the number of thematic debates on cross-cutting, emerging security issues. Canada was pleased to contribute to this trend with an initiative on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Such initiatives enable the Council to consider key peace and security issues in a broader context and in a more comprehensive manner than its usual crisis mode allows. In addition, these initiatives have helped move the Council towards a broader definition of security. The report also registers important milestones in the Council's work, such as the suspension of sanctions against Libya and the authorization of new United Nations Missions in East Timor and Kosovo.

We are, however, struck by what is not included in the more than 400 pages of the report. The inability of the Council to address a number of key security issues this past year is cause for deep concern. Crises in which Council action is blocked by lack of agreement among the five permanent members — for example, the crisis in Kosovo — or where deep divisions persist, such as with regard to Iraq, undermine the Council's effectiveness. Political and policy differences must be overcome in the name of the collective interest; the threat or use of the veto must give way to more vigorous efforts to find consensus.

Equally troubling is the persistent trend towards allowing financial considerations to drive or dominate decision-making on whether and how to respond to clear threats to international peace and security. Too often this attitude has hindered resolute action and resulted in reliance on others — often those least capable of paying — to implement the Council's sometimes imperfectly articulated will. The Security Council's proud tradition of peacekeeping must not be allowed to fade as a result of financial starvation, bureaucratic atrophy or mere disuse.

(spoke in English)

We must also learn from our mistakes and take stock of what works and what does not.

Trust funds established to finance multinational forces, authorized by the Council to replace United Nations peacekeeping missions funded through accepted assessment mechanisms, simply do not work. Most recently, they have not worked for the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Sierra Leone, nor for the International Force for East Timor. In Sierra Leone, only $2 million was deposited into the trust fund; this sum did not cover even three days of ECOMOG operations. Given this track record, there is no reason to expect that trust funds will work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or anywhere else.

Obviously, Japan's generous contribution of $100 million to the East Timor trust fund is a significant — perhaps unique — exception, but even such a contribution will go only a very limited way towards defraying the huge costs of this important peacekeeping operation. Troop contributors will be left to pick up the lion's share of the bill, and this is not how it is supposed to work. ECOMOG has done outstanding and thankless work in Sierra Leone, taking large numbers of casualties in appallingly difficult circumstances, daring to go into harm's way when few others were prepared to do so, and thereby bringing some measure of stability to parts of the country. Nigeria — the principal contributor of troops and bearer of costs — has said it can no longer shoulder such a burden. We will, nevertheless, dispatch a hybrid force to Sierra Leone within which the ECOMOG component is still to be funded by passing the hat which we — the international community — will fail yet again to fill.

The reality of the restraints and constraints on government financing in almost every part of the world is such that the enormous costs of peacekeeping, on almost any scale, simply cannot be met by voluntary contributions. Our Governments, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, accept their obligations under the United Nations Charter to pay formally assessed peacekeeping costs on the basis of the agreed scale of assessments. They have not voted — and, I predict, will not vote — any significant amount of what our finance ministries would term "discretionary" spending for peacekeeping missions that are not commanded and mandated by the United Nations; in other words, for missions that are not

classic United Nations peacekeeping operations. This is, after all, the essence of collective security.

Peace and security are fundamental, core responsibilities of this Organization. They cannot and should not be subcontracted or otherwise farmed out to regional associations or ad hoc groups of countries willing to take on such large commitments of financial and human resources. Of course, regional organizations and key regional players will continue to play a fundamentally important leadership role in many peacekeeping operations, but the goal of a universal United Nations mandate, as long as it is obtainable, remains of paramount importance to the principles on which this Organization is founded, and ought to remain our objective in all situations where collective action to maintain or restore the peace is called for.

Thanks to the Secretary-General's insightful and, from our Canadian perspective, very welcome statement at the opening of this year's general debate, a dialogue has been launched among Member States on essential questions relating to the mission and the mandate of the United Nations generally, and the Security Council in particular, as the United Nations pursues its peace and security vocation. The Secretary-General successfully combined hard truths about the recent failures of collective security with a challenging vision for the future. That vision, which places human security at the centre of our work, is fully shared by Canada. The key challenge, that of elaborating the factors of when and how to intervene to protect civilians in armed conflict, is one which this Organization must be ready to meet.

On the Council, Canada has argued that humanitarian principles and human rights should be given greater weight in the Security Council's calculus of when and how to act, not only because of their direct impact on the peace and security equation, but also as standards which ought to be enforced on their own merits. The principles of state sovereignty and human security must be more readily reconciled in practice. As recent events have shown, failure to do so risks sidelining the Council in addressing today's conflicts.

Work towards this new definition of security must be accompanied by updated working methods, greater transparency and much less secrecy. Canada and the other elected members have done their part to open up the Council's working methods to broader scrutiny through regular briefings for interested non-members and, under Canada's presidency, the posting of a wealth of information on the Council's activities on our mission website.

To enhance the Council's effectiveness, we believe that there ought to be more scope for the participation of non-members in the Council's deliberations — whether formal or informal — when their presence could make a useful contribution to the Council's efforts to prevent and control conflict. We believe the Council should hold more open meetings. We consider that the Council ought to make more imaginative and more innovative use of other formats that go well beyond the "Arria formula" in order to permit more inclusive involvement of non-members and a better informed airing of views before far-reaching decisions are taken. The Council's decisions and procedures must reinforce the search for peace, not just the prerogatives of the most powerful. We hope that next year's report and others to follow will reflect progress on these fronts.

We look forward to working closely with the newly elected members of the Security Council, who will bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to our deliberations. We will miss, of course, the five departing members, who so generously offered us wise advice from the very moment we joined their number at the beginning of this year. Two years is not a long time to get the kinds of changes proposed by so many speakers today brought to the way the Council does business. Such changes will, however, remain elusive unless the pressure for change can be sustained from one group of elected members to the next.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I wish to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his eloquent and objective presentation of this year's report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. Indeed, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Namibia attaches great importance to this practice, which has now been in effect for seven years.

It is clear from the report that a lot of time has been devoted to African issues during the period under review. Nevertheless, Africa continues to be beset by mounting and pressing problems, which require concerted efforts on the part of the Security Council and the international community as a whole.

The Security Council has been supportive of regional efforts aimed at conflict resolution on the continent. However, we believe that resolution of these problems should not be the sole responsibility of Africans. The Security Council has to take its responsibility and not delegate it to any subregional or

regional group if the credibility of that international body is to be preserved.

In the aftermath of conflicts, it is important to embark on post-conflict peace-building measures. It is equally important that emphasis be placed on prevention and minimizing recurrence.

Africa is determined to promote the use of peaceful means in the resolution of conflicts engulfing the continent. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is a valuable asset for our continent and must be nurtured, supported and consolidated. The Mechanism symbolizes the concrete resolve of our continent to fully assume its responsibility. To this end, the OAU will need the full cooperation of States Members of the United Nations.

By adopting resolutions 1234 (1999) and 1258 (1999), for example, the Security Council has taken the first steps in addressing the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We look forward to the full deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in that country to facilitate the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The imminent adoption of the Security Council resolution to deploy 6,000 military personnel in Sierra Leone will stabilize the situation in that country and give peace a chance. We look forward to a speedy deployment of this peacekeeping operation. Other situations in Africa should equally be addressed.

The Secretary-General has not wavered in his efforts to address African problems. In addition, last year the Security Council held the biennial ministerial meeting on the Secretary-General's report on Africa, at which and subsequent to which resolutions and presidential statements were adopted. It is our sincere hope that the recommendations contained in these resolutions and statements will be implemented by the Secretariat, Member States and other stakeholders.

The plight of civilians, and in particular of children in armed conflict, has received due consideration by the Security Council. We are gratified that the suffering of these silent members of society has been recognized and that the Security Council and all relevant United Nations bodies continue with their efforts to address their plight.

The question of the reform of the Security Council is central to the efficacy, credibility and authority of the Council. Although some progress has been made in enhancing transparency and accessibility in the work of the Council, much remains to be done. Transparency will not hinder the work of the Council; it can only enhance its activities.

Namibia's position with regard to the reform of the Security Council is clear. We favour an expansion of the Security Council to reflect the reality of the dramatic increase of the United Nations membership, which stands at 188 as of September this year.

We welcome Mali and Tunisia, which were recently elected to the Council, and wish to thank the Gambia and Gabon for their invaluable contributions to the work of the Council. Similarly, we look forward to working together with Bangladesh, Jamaica and Ukraine in carrying out the responsibilities of the Security Council.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is an honour to address the Members of the United Nations on the report (A/54/2) of the Security Council. I wish to thank the current President of the Security Council, Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for introducing the report. In addition, I wish to thank the members of the Security Council for the effort that went into the production of such a comprehensive report.

The report of the Security Council shows that over the past year the Council has struggled to come to grips with a wide range of both long-standing and new conflicts whose tragic effects, especially on civilians, and scope and complexity have profoundly threatened the maintenance of international peace and security.

The report shows that the Security Council's ability, and even willingness, to address conflicts timeously, consistently and impartially has been sorely tested. This deficiency, as stated by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Assembly, is nothing less than a reflection of our inability to reconcile the need for universal legitimacy with the need to effectively defend human rights.

It is therefore understandable, given the past record of our collective failures, most notably in Africa in places like Angola, Rwanda and Somalia, that some events over the course of this past year would have led many, if not most, of the Members of the United Nations to expect the worst.

But at the same time the Council continued its attempts to expand the transparency of its work by, amongst other things, holding more open meetings on a range of important issues. We trust these steps represent a recognition on the part of the Council of the importance of maintaining a sustained and transparent dialogue with the broader membership of the United Nations on the key issues affecting global peace and security.

For this trend to be meaningful, however, the Council will have to move beyond the practice of focusing on thematic issues alone in open debates — and I am not saying these are not important — towards regular, open discussions which focus on practical ways to address specific conflicts, and more important, potential conflicts.

In short, the Council needs to regularly consult with the membership. The alternative, the continuation of the "business as usual" approach, does not look good.

In this context, over the past year the many instances in which the Council appeared unable to cohesively address conflict issues gave us little confidence. Here I am thinking of the many controversies which characterized the Council's approach to such issues as Kosovo, Libyan sanctions, the deadlock over Iraq, the descent into violence in East Timor and the largest conventional wars in Africa since the end of the Second World War, between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Given this environment, many members were led, once again, to legitimately question the ongoing relevance and capacity of the Security Council, and the illogical and patriarchal nature of its current composition and distribution of powers.

President Mbeki underlined these concerns in his statement to the General Assembly last month, when he said:

> "the requirement on the United Nations ... to prevent the outbreak of hostilities imposes an obligation on the United Nations that it should be seen by Governments and peoples as a truly even-handed interlocutor and peacemaker." *(A/54/PV.4, p. 9)*

More recently, however, I am pleased to say that there have been some promising signals. Positive developments and accomplishments in Kosovo and East Timor have been accompanied by further encouraging signs that the Security Council may intend to approach other conflicts, especially in Africa, with the necessary level of attention and determination, combined with an appropriate mandate, which recently proved so critical in addressing the questions of Kosovo and East Timor.

This positive new trend on the part of the Council, if it is allowed to progress beyond words into action, is in itself a constructive and appropriate response to an equal determination on the part of Africa, and its regional and subregional organizations, to take charge of our own destiny through regional interventions to resolve conflicts in Sierra Leone, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi.

All that we ask, not unreasonably, is that the United Nations support these indigenous endeavours collectively by taking appropriate and meaningful action, at the appropriate time and as determined by the continent. It is especially important that the region's sincere undertakings in conflict prevention and resolution are thereafter supported by the proper Security Council mandate.

South Africa trusts that in the days, weeks and months to come this emergent new dialogue between the African continent and the Security Council will prove to be sustainable, and will prove central to bringing lasting peace to Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to other conflicts that the continent is still in the process of addressing.

For our part, as Africans we are striving to ensure that the search for indigenous solutions to conflicts in Africa's regions is accompanied by local initiatives to strengthen the democratic character of national and regional institutions, the culture of respect for human rights and the related areas of better governance and sustainable policies for economic and social development.

It is our earnest hope also that if a new spirit of cooperation and accountability comes to characterize the Security Council's current interactions with Member States, this same spirit will find expression in the debate on the reform of the composition and working methods of the Security Council over the next year.

Our future successes or failures in preventing and ending conflicts will depend largely on the collective will and action of the Members of the United Nations and, in particular, on a Security Council that is appropriately representative of the membership.

As President Mbeki stated, it will require "moral and intellectual courage" to rise to the challenge.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to consider the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly covering the period from 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999. We express our appreciation to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, President of the Council this month, for his excellent introduction of the report.

The annual report reflects the extensive activities of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. During the past decade, we have seen the world community increasingly turn to the United Nations for solutions. Norway welcomes this development. Collective international security rests on the Member States' commitment to multilateral cooperation and on their respect for the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the prevention of conflicts and the preservation of peace.

The General Assembly, in turn, has a legitimate interest in being fully informed of the activities of the Council. The annual report must be as informative as possible. Norway appreciates the efforts to make the report ever more user-friendly and useful to the membership at large. We will encourage the Council to continue pursuing these efforts.

The division of labour between the General Assembly and the Security Council that is established in the Charter must be respected. Nothing must be done that might reduce the Council's ability to efficiently carry out its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. At the same time, it is clear that questions of peace and security are closely connected to issues that are the responsibility of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General has pointedly underlined the interlinkages between United Nations peace and development efforts, as well as the need for coordination between various United Nations bodies.

The General Assembly is responsible for vital areas such as poverty reduction, development assistance, peace-building, human rights and the environment. These are crucial to understanding and tackling the root causes of conflicts. Norway therefore stresses the need for a comprehensive approach, entailing close cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Norway has consistently underlined the importance of improving transparency and openness in the work of the Security Council. Progress has indeed been achieved over the past few years. We welcome the fact that both regular and informal practices for sharing information with non-members have been established. Norway appreciates the practice of holding open orientation debates on important issues on the Council's agenda. Such debates should ensure that the views of the United Nations membership at large are taken into account in the Council's own deliberations.

Norway would like to reiterate its support for the idea that the Council should consider organizing meetings which are largely informative — such as briefings by the Secretariat or Special Representatives of the Secretary-General — as open meetings rather than consultations of the whole. This would, of course, not preclude the possibility that the Council after such briefings, would conduct closed consultations on the issue at hand.

Transparency and openness are particularly important when it comes to peacekeeping operations, which involve the participation of forces and personnel from a large number of countries beyond the membership of the Security Council. All troop-contributing nations, including those participating with civilian personnel in multifunctional operations, have a legitimate interest and need to be consulted when such operations are discussed. In advance of considering mandates for peacekeeping operations, all potential contributors should be given the opportunity to present their views. Norway appreciates the mechanisms that have been established for this purpose. It is the responsibility of all Council members and troop-contributors to make full use of such mechanisms.

Regional and subregional organizations have in recent years become ever more important instruments in United Nations efforts to promote international peace and security. In the Balkans, the United Nations is working together with organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and others to restore peace and stability. As Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE this year, Norway has pursued the building of closer relations with the United Nations system, and closer interaction between various organizations involved in peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building in the OSCE area.

In Africa, the Organization of African Unity and subregional bodies such as the Southern African

Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and others play a crucial role as cooperation partners, complementing United Nations efforts for peace and development. Norway is proud to be working closely with these organizations and national Governments for conflict management and development cooperation in Africa. It is vital that the Security Council remain fully engaged in the resolution of conflicts on the African continent, thus giving impetus to the progress witnessed in several areas.

The Security Council remains at the centre of the international community's search for lasting peace and security for the world's nations. This it how it should be. As we enter a new century, it is of vital importance to all Members of the United Nations that the authority of the Council remain strong and undiminished. The Security Council can, of course, rely on Norway's full commitment and support.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to join previous speakers in expressing appreciation to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and President of the Security Council for the month of October 1999, for introducing the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

My delegation welcomes the opportunity for general membership of the United Nations to discuss and review the work of the Security Council. As the organ of the United Nations with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, a responsibility conferred upon it by the general membership of the United Nations, the Security Council plays a key role which directly affects the interests of all Member States.

The General Assembly is now considering the report of the Council not only in accordance with Article 15, paragraph 1, and Article 24, paragraph 3 of the Charter, as underlined in the introduction to the Security Council report, but also in the light of Article 24, paragraph 1 of the Charter. That paragraph determines that the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security is not an inherent right of the Council but a responsibility conferred upon it by the general membership; and it states that the general membership agreed, in the atmosphere prevailing 54 years ago, that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility, the Security Council acts on their behalf.

Therefore, as a member of the General Assembly, we attach considerable importance to this agenda item, for each and every Member of the United Nations wishes to know not only what the Security Council is doing on its behalf but also why and how the Council is doing it. Unfortunately, the 476-page report contained in document A/54/2 covering the period from 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999, tells us only what the Security Council has done. There is very little, if any, analysis or treatment of lessons learned in the report despite repeated calls by the general membership, which wishes only to be better informed.

The report continues to be largely a compilation of documents. It needs to contain information on informal consultations of the whole, where most important decisions are
made. It should include not only the dates and subjects of each informal consultation but also a brief account of discussions.

Informal consultations taking place among the members of the Council on issues crucial to global peace and security, sometimes have a very direct and substantive impact on the vital interests of other States. These consultations normally constitute the foundation of Security Council resolutions and statements, with very little input from the wider membership. Of course, we recognize the need for the promptness, effectiveness and, at times, confidentiality of Security Council decision-making. However, these considerations do not justify a very narrow interpretation of Article 31 of the Charter by which interested Member States are excluded from contributing to the decision-making process of the Council or, even worse, are denied access to timely and meaningful information concerning Security Council decisions, their formulation and the implementation processes.

This is not to negate the fact that over the past few years, the Council has adopted a number of initiatives to make its working methods and its report more transparent and informative. We welcome and encourage those efforts, although we do not consider them sufficient.

We are happy to see that most monthly assessments of the work of the Security Council by the rotating Presidents of the Council are included in the report. These assessments complement the report in a very useful manner. We hope that all monthly presidential assessments continue to evolve and rely less on

description and more on conceptual and analytical assessment of the work of the Security Council.

The holding of an informal briefing by the presidency of the Council for States not members of the Council at the end of each informal meeting is a commendable measure. We believe that this positive step may be strengthened and become more useful if it is given some structure and uniformity. Currently, there seems to be a vicious cycle in place. The low turnout by representatives of Member States works as a disincentive for the Security Council President to be forthcoming in the briefing, but, on the other hand, representatives of Member States lose interest when the Security Council President or his representative is not forthcoming and provides little information. My delegation wishes to reiterate its suggestion, presented in the debates on this issue in the last two years, that the informal briefings by the Presidents of the Security Council be issued in the form of a press release on the same day or the day after and that a cross- reference to them be made in the annual report of the Council.

Two years ago, on 29 October 1997, when considering this item in the General assembly, my delegation raised a point concerning the coverage accorded to the work of the Military Staff Committee. I wish to note that in this year's report, 26 lines are devoted to the work of the Military Staff Committee which, compared to the reports of the last two years, shows an increase of about 600 per cent. We consider this a good first step in the right direction.

The Security Council faced a considerable degree of upheaval last year. The human tragedy in Kosovo presented a test to the Security Council in respect of our changing world. It may not be far-fetched to suggest that even the permanent members of the Council are not too happy with the performance of the Council, let alone the general membership of the United Nations, which, by and large, feels that the Security Council failed to perform its responsibility under Chapter VII of the Charter and instead forfeited that responsibility to a regional military alliance. This should have been a wake-up call for all of us: if the Security Council is not brought up to date and democratized, then the concept of collective security contained in the Charter is bound to be compromised over and over again in the future, and the Security Council will thus be incapable of carrying out the responsibility that the States Members initially conferred upon it.

The crux of the problem lies in the anachronistic and undemocratic practice of the veto. In our view, the experience of the Security Council last year — particularly in the case of Kosovo, because of its fundamental impact on the authority and credibility of the Council — warrants a special report by the Security Council to the General Assembly under Article 15 of the Charter. Such a report should review the problems with which the Council was faced, the deadlock and the reasons which gave rise to it, and how the Council anticipates resolving a similar situation in the future. The position of my delegation on the issue of the veto has been spelled out in the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which is under consideration in the ad hoc committee which deals with the reform of the Security Council.

Another important issue which is related to the experience of the Council in Kosovo and enjoys prominence in the statement of the Secretary-General is the question of humanitarian intervention. It is a truism that the international community cannot and must not remain aloof from bloodshed and massive violations of human rights when they occur within the borders of a State. However, since the sovereignty of States continues to constitute the very cornerstone of law-based international relations, care must be taken that the concept of humanitarian intervention is not deliberated in an atmosphere which cannot accommodate a truly deliberative process and in which all States cannot adequately contribute to its refinement.

Mr. Singhvi (India): Permit me and my delegation to express our appreciation to the President of the Security Council for his introduction of the report of the Security Council. We would aiso like to take this opportunity to congratulate Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine on their election to the Security Council. Elected by the General Assembly on the basis of criteria laid down in Article 23 of the Charter, the non-permanent members help make the Security Council a little more representative and the system, with all its shortcomings, a little less imperfect.

The Charter makes it amply clear that the Security Council is one of the principal organs of the United Nations and that it is entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security on behalf of all the Members of the United Nations. That is why Article 24, paragraph 3, and Article 15 of the Charter require the Security Council to submit, and the General Assembly to receive and consider, annual and special reports. The submission of the Security Council's annual report to the General Assembly for its

consideration establishes the constitutional nexus of the accountability of the Security Council to the General Assembly, though, for obvious reasons, the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security is conferred upon the Security Council by the Charter, which gives pride of place to its membership.

The conferment of that primary responsibility has to be seen in the context of the composition of the Security Council, the election of all the non-permanent members by the General Assembly, the provision of the Charter that the Security Council acts on behalf of all Members and the crucial caveat of accountability in the form of submission of reports to and consideration by the General Assembly. These reports are like the hyphen that joins and the buckle that binds the Security Council to the General Assembly. An analysis of the organic instrument of the United Nations shows that the primary and penultimate responsibility of the Security Council is linked to the consideration of its report by the General Assembly. Therefore, we would urge the Security Council, in the discharge of that primary responsibility, to confine itself strictly to the mandate embodied in the Charter, to be responsive to the comments and discussions in the General Assembly and to be procedurally transparent. The faithful observance of those norms alone can secure and reinforce a healthy constitutional relationship between the two principal organs, namely, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The General Assembly encapsulated those norms in its resolution 51/193 of 1996, which was adopted with a view to improving the reporting procedures of the Security Council. In that resolution, the General Assembly called upon the Security Council to include, *inter alia*, information on the consultations of the whole undertaken prior to action or deliberation by the Security Council on issues within its mandate and the process leading to such action; to highlight the extent to which resolutions of the General Assembly on issues falling within the scope of the General Assembly and the Security Council had been taken into account by the Council in its decision-making; and to strengthen further the section of the report on the steps taken by the Council to improve its working methods.

Though some welcome changes have been introduced, the Council's report now under discussion has not fully followed the letter and the spirit of resolution 51/193 of 1996. As a result, the General Assembly, which is called upon by the Charter to consider the report, is placed at a serious disadvantage. The consideration of the report by the General Assembly is not an empty ritual, and that is why we reiterate the rationale and the compelling need for further improvements in the reporting procedures.

The problem of an inadequate and unsatisfactory reporting system is aggravated by the Security Council's resorting to the system of meeting behind closed doors, not as a rare or occasional exception but more or less as a rule. A closed meeting in extraordinary circumstances might have some justification, but when it takes the form and frequency of an addictive habit, it violates the principle of transparency and openness, which is the leitmotif of our era. The Council's rules of procedure do not countenance the practice. Rule 48 provides that the Security Council shall meet in public unless it decides otherwise. The plain implication of the rule is that ordinarily the Security Council shall meet in public unless it decides otherwise for good and compelling reasons. Most of the time there are no such compelling reasons, and yet frequent and persistent departures from the norm of meeting in public have become quite routine.

The peoples of the world, in whose name the Charter was proclaimed, have a right to know. Members of the United Nations, big and small, have a right to know. It follows that we need a great deal more sunshine, a new standard and quality of candour and a new sense of accountability to encompass and legitimize power and responsibility. Deliberating behind closed doors and announcing the formal conclusions to the world at large is no longer an acceptable procedure for the open society towards which the world is moving.

This issue has been raised during the discussions in the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on the restructuring of the Security Council and in previous deliberations on the report of the Security Council. Both non-members of the Council and the non-permanent members of the Council have in the past complained of a lack of transparency in the Council's work. I recall from the record of last year's deliberations that the need to enhance transparency was stressed and conceded by representative after representative. It was agreed that transparency applied not only to the way in which the Council carries out its work, but also to the way in which that work is reported and recorded; and that the imbalance between open meetings of the Council and the far more frequent use of the informal consultations of the whole had to be redressed. The issue has long been debated, but no real progress is in sight in spite of the chorus of consensus that once again characterizes the debate this year.

I might add that the principle of the need for transparency applies not only to the Council's deliberations but also to the work of its subsidiary bodies, in order to avoid the kind of divisive debate witnessed last year over the functioning of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq.

Beyond the flaws in the reporting procedures and in the meetings behind closed doors, there is a deeper subterranean fault line, a malady which points to the loss of moral vision and the democratic ethos of representation in the Security Council. Many a problem confronts us today because of the way the Security Council is structured. The structure and composition of the Security Council are demonstrably out of touch with the ground realities and no longer meet the aspirations and expectations of the membership and of the international community. The solution lies in reforming and restructuring the Council comprehensively. The inclusion of developing countries in the permanent membership would make the Council more representative, relevant and vibrant. It would also make it more effective by bringing to the Council's actions the support of a much broader spectrum of the international community. We will make our detailed comments on this issue during discussions on the agenda item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Suffice it to say that the restructuring of the Security Council is a moral imperative and a practical necessity. We are dismayed to find that there is pointless delay in translating the basic ideas of restructuring into a reality. The danger is that the delay in restructuring may make the system less relevant, less effectual and somewhat moribund. That is why restructuring has an urgency of its own.

The Security Council has rightly expressed grave concern with regard to the impact of terrorism on international peace and security. Happily, the resolution adopted by the Security Council yesterday shows that concern as the first step and as a potential spearhead of purposeful action. We congratulate the Security Council for its resolve to wage a common fight against terrorism everywhere. We agree with the consensus view of the Security Council in yesterday's meeting that we must not be dissuaded by phony arguments about just causes and claims about the supposedly political character of acts of terrorism. Let us hope that we will now move in the direction of a global regime to effectively outlaw terrorism, whatever its pretensions and excuses may be.

The spectre of terrorism today haunts and threatens civilization itself. It imperils our common future. Organized terrorism as an instrument of policy by certain States and terrorism perpetrated by stray individuals and groups pose a clear and present danger to international peace and security. Terrorists are financed, funded, trained, encouraged, assisted and used by the Governments which nurture terrorist groups and individuals and give them their protection, patronage under cloak-and-dagger tactics and safe haven. Such state-sponsored terrorism has absolutely no place in contemporary international relations. There is often only a thin line between the troops of the States sponsoring terrorism and terrorist intruders, infiltrators, saboteurs and mercenaries, who are used unscrupulously. The purpose of such state-sponsored terrorism is to destabilize other countries and Governments, in wanton violation of the comity and conventions of international law on friendly relations between sovereign nations. It endangers international peace and security.

The Security Council must demonstrate the political will to address and combat this problem. Towards that end the international community must now prepare a global convention and a global blueprint to fight and destroy terrorism, to facilitate extradition and to prevent and punish terrorism everywhere.

Afghanistan remains a source of the deepest anxiety for peace and security in the world. Our sympathies are with the people of Afghanistan, who are in the throes of a tragic conflict, confrontation and crisis. We do not have to go far in seeking the causes of that tragedy. In that climate of intense hostility and pervasive distrust, the world community has a vital role to play. We welcome the Council's recent action on Afghanistan, which needs to be followed up regularly, persistently and with determination. The Security Council has repeatedly expressed grave concern at events in Afghanistan and stressed the need for a peaceful political settlement. Ignoring the Council's advice and edicts, however, the Taliban launched yet another offensive earlier this year, in July. The Council, by adopting resolution 1267 (1999) last week, has given another chance to the Taliban to end its support for international terrorism. We hope and pray that they will heed the voice of the world community and that the misery and suffering of the people of Afghanistan will be alleviated. Unfortunately, our hopes are a hostage to despair. As a neighbour, India views the situation in Afghanistan with grave concern. We hope that the Security Council will give the problem of Afghanistan the priority attention it deserves.

While regional organizations have a role in peacekeeping in accordance with the Charter, the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council. This role of the Security Council has been eroded, abridged and subverted by the developments of the past few years. This is a disturbing trend and raises many intractable questions. In some cases, regional organizations may not have the resources, or the mandate, or the truly international outlook and perspective to maintain peace and security. Delegating or abdicating the Council's responsibility for peacekeeping in such cases would simply create a chaotic void. Even in cases where regional organizations have the military capacity, they lack the universal character of the United Nations and may reflect only regional compulsions or narrow and limited approaches. Their actions therefore would appear to be partisan, unless they have a mandate derived directly from the Security Council and function under its umbrella.

The Secretary-General has aptly pointed out, in his annual report on the work of the Organization, that

> "if the primacy of the Security Council with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security is rejected, the very foundations of international law as represented by the Charter will be brought into question." *(A/54/1, para. 69)*

He added:

> "No other universally accepted legal basis for constraining wanton acts of violence exists." (ibid.)

We feel that the Security Council's role in authorizing and undertaking peacekeeping operations, when required, must be strengthened, and the universally accepted legal basis for constraining wanton acts of violence be repaired and reinstated. We cannot view with equanimity the relegation of the Charter and the relegation of the Security Council to the role of a passive spectator and its real role being pre-empted.

The Council's actions need greater clarity, equity and sense of purpose. It has to be seen to act fairly, consistently and decisively. For instance, the role of the Council in running the oil-for-food programme for Iraq, under which the Council members decide which contracts to approve and which to put on hold, has led to a situation where hundreds of contracts worth over $450 million have been put on hold, without any effective or independent avenue to improve the situation.

We welcome the Security Council debate on Africa, in which India participated. In the past, early warnings were not heeded. Often enough, the Security Council failed to respond in time to African crises or to sustain its commitments to Africa. We note that some new initiatives are afoot. We would support and participate in the operation in Sierra Leone and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is no gainsaying that Africa's problems demand a more comprehensive solution with inputs and contributions from other organs of the United Nations. This has been acknowledged by Security Council resolution 1170 (1998), which expressed the hope that the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant bodies of the United Nations and international financial institutions would consider the Secretary-General's report and take appropriate action. Peace and security in Africa will depend on an all-out preventive effort, constructive multilateral diplomacy and a strong developmental perspective.

India is proud to have been in the forefront of troop-contributing countries in most of the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. While we appreciate the increased and regular interaction between the Council and the troop-contributing countries, we believe that the quality of that interaction could be improved. There should be fuller consultation with the major troop-contributing countries, especially before any change in the mandate of an operation.

The Security Council has the responsibility to redress the economic problems of third countries affected by the sanctions it has mandated. Though this matter has been under discussion in the Sixth Committee for a number of years, no tangible progress has been achieved. We hope that the Council will display a strong problem-solving approach and greater political will to give effect to Article 50 of the Charter. The mandate of Article 50 is that States affected by preventive or enforcement measures taken against another State by the Security Council have a right to consult the Council, which then has the obligation to find a fair solution to the problem.

There is a strange paradox. While attempts are being made by some to ease the Security Council out of its role in peacekeeping, which is its responsibility under the Charter, it shows a tendency to assume a proactive, and occasionally not-so-objective, role for itself in a variety of other areas like human rights, disarmament or international humanitarian law. This blurring of the distinction between the roles of different organs or bodies

can create a counterproductive confusion and conflicts of jurisdiction, which are best avoided.

The United Nations enshrines a vision which delineates humanity's tryst with its new destiny. We need to strengthen that vision. We need to recast and reconstruct United Nations structures and procedural modalities to translate that vision into a living reality and to give the United Nations a new momentum on the threshold of the twenty-first century. We need to remember that peace is a many-splendoured concept, as explained by the sages and seers of ancient India who proclaimed that humankind is one family, that the quest for peace in the inner and outer space of human consciousness and endeavour ranges from the social, scientific, economic, religious, political and ecological to the ethical and the spiritual. Freedom, peace and justice, although intertwined, have a security dimension, and that security dimension has been entrusted to the Security Council so that succeeding generations may be saved from the scourge of war, violence and bloodshed. The Security Council will, I am sure, be an instrument for fulfilling our sanguine hope and our resonant resolve in the twenty-first century.

We expect the Council to give due consideration to the constructive comments offered in this Assembly today and reflect them in its working, in its approach to problems, in its restructuring and in its next report. In the success of the Security Council lies the possibility of the success of the great human experiment in, and enterprise of, togetherness that is the United Nations.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): With regard to the working methods of the Security Council, in particular the issues of transparency, Argentina has the honour of working in close cooperation with the New Zealand delegation, which has indicated to me that it endorses what I am about to say.

Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation introduced to the General Assembly the report (A/54/2) of the Security Council. We thank him for the statement he made in his capacity as President of the Security Council.

Our commitment to increased transparency in the working methods of the Security Council is well known. On that matter I need only reiterate that we make ourselves available to all those Member States that are not members of the Security Council in order to continue to make progress towards that goal, which is essential for the Organization's reform process.

The latest developments in Security Council procedure have placed the presidency in a key position. The presidency is responsible for providing daily briefings to the other Members of the United Nations and the media. It is also responsible for the presentation and content of the monthly assessments which appear in the addendum to the report. It is also the President of the Security Council who is mandated to meet with the representatives of the other Members of the United Nations. This delegation of responsibilities to the presidency provides additional guarantees of transparency because the person responsible for providing information is identified.

On 23 September last, after meeting with the Secretary-General, the five permanent members issued a statement in which they affirmed that any attempt to curtail their right of veto would not be conducive to the process of reforming the Security Council. However, it must now be accepted that the exercise of the veto — as understood by the permanent members — is incompatible with the will of the vast majority of Member States. If that is not truly understood, the efforts to reform the working methods of the Council will not have a bright future.

The report shows that in the period under review more than 50 meetings of troop-contributing countries took place. We are pleased to note the good results of the initiative to institutionalize those meetings, a process led since 1994 by, among others, the delegations of New Zealand and Argentina. We hope that this practice, as set out in the presidential statements of 3 May and 4 November 1994 and 28 March 1996, will continue to benefit the countries that contribute personnel in fulfilment of the mandates of the Security Council. We do not share the objections, based on the alleged poor attendance. The goal of those meetings was, and still is, to give the troop-contributing countries a forum to express their concerns. We feel the same way about the criticism of the briefing meetings for non-members of the Security Council, based on the same arguments.

A reading of the first paragraphs of the report confirms that over two thirds of the Council's work takes place in the so-called informal consultations, to which access is still denied to non-members. However, there is no reason why such countries should be permanently denied the right to participate in the informal consultations on the basis of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter. The right to participate of countries whose interests are affected by the discussion of an issue

brought to the attention of the Security Council was debated at length this year in the Working Group on documentation and procedure. Its draft report still has not been adopted by the Security Council because some members do not agree that it should at least be made clear that there was no agreement regarding the participation in informal consultations of non-members and representatives of international organizations.

We have emphasized on several occasions that Argentina acknowledges the usefulness of such consultations. We think that they are important and frequent enough to warrant the establishment of rules for their proceedings in order to guarantee their proper functioning.

Closed formal meetings, such as the one to be held next week to hear Mr. Jacques Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Bosnia and Herzegovina, can be a valid mechanism for the participation of countries that are not members of the Council. Another valid mechanism is the formal open meeting, with records and a media presence, such as that in which we heard President Chiluba of Zambia and he listened to us.

We reiterate our reluctance to utilize other types of formulas for the Security Council to communicate with Government representatives. As Ambassador Arria of Venezuela and several delegations, including our own, have explained on a number of occasions, the "Arria formula" is not the proper one for that purpose. That formula is an innovative and useful mechanism that allows the Council to establish truly informal and off-the-record contacts with individuals and organizations whose activities might be relevant to the issues on the agenda. The fact that it has been used to hear Foreign Ministers or other Ministers of Member States does not reflect either the intent or the spirit of the formula developed by Ambassador Arria, and it implies a failure by the Council to devise mechanisms for dialogue within the limits of its rules of procedure.

Meetings open to other Member countries are another forum that can be used for briefings by the Secretary-General, his representatives, and other high Secretariat officials. We are moving gradually towards the point where such oral briefings will no longer be given in informal consultations to which non-members of the Council lack access.

The influence of the General Assembly has yielded results. Let us remember that the improvements made to the report were adopted by the Council after the Assembly had adopted its resolution 51/193. Step by step, we will succeed in improving the working methods of the Security Council and in bringing them into line with democratic principles. We are optimistic, because intransigence on these matters seems less and less viable.

We pay tribute to United Nations staff members killed or wounded as they carried out activities entrusted to them by the Security Council. We believe that the Security Council must be mindful of these tragedies and consider appropriate measures to prevent such events in the future. The comments the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, made to the General Assembly on 14 October were eloquent and require a response.

In conclusion, we congratulate the delegations of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine on their election to membership of the Security Council for the next biennium, and we welcome them to the Council.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): I wish to join previous speakers in thanking the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, President of the Security Council for the month of October 1999, for introducing the report of the Security Council. The entire membership of this Organization attaches great importance to the work of the Security Council, and the annual report is a useful mechanism to keep the wider membership informed of the Council's activities and decisions. The Charter of the United Nations provides in its Article 15 that the General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Council. This provision constitutes the most important link between the Assembly, which is the only organ consisting of all members, and the Security Council, which acts on our behalf.

While both principal organs are vested with different and specific mandates, each in its own way serves the interest of the entire membership. As a useful tool to keep non-members informed of the Council's work, the report must reflect the objective circumstances surrounding the consideration of various issues on the agenda of the Council. We are therefore encouraged by the progressive improvements over the last few years in the Council's reports, including the present one.

Turning to the report before us, we are pleased to note a new appendix to the report, containing reports of the sanctions committees. This wider coverage of the

work of the subsidiary organs of the Council is a welcome step. We are equally pleased to observe the continued inclusion of the monthly assessments prepared by former Presidents of the Security Council. We continue to hold the view that these assessments contribute to our better understanding of the considerations which were taken into account in adopting important resolutions concerning many issues on the Council's agenda. Although these assessments are voluntary in nature and do not necessarily represent the views of the Security Council as a whole, they provide a useful and valuable insight into the informal consultations where important decisions of the Council are generally considered and thus complement the report in an effective manner. The inclusion in this year's report of statements to the press made by the President following consultations of the whole of the Council add to the value of these assessments. We subscribe to the view that these assessments should be compulsory. We urge Presidents of the Council to maintain this positive practice in the meantime.

While we still hold the view that there remain some aspects of the report that need to be improved, we consider that the improvements that have been made thus far in the format and content of the report are important steps towards greater transparency in the work of the Council. Openness and transparency are particularly important for an organ such as the Security Council, which deals with vital issues of international peace and security. We strongly feel that it is the right of the international community to be adequately informed, through all viable mechanisms, of what the Council is doing in its name.

In this respect, we would like to reiterate our view, presented at the last session of the General Assembly under the same item, that the Security Council should submit special reports to the General Assembly on certain important issues. We were heartened when the Council decided to consider and review ways to improve the Council's documentation and procedures, including the provision of special reports as called for in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter. We wish to encourage the Council to follow up that important decision with specific actions which will add to transparency in the work of the Council. We are of the view that the present efforts towards greater transparency and openness must be pursued on a sustained basis. My delegation fully supports the mechanisms and practices that have been established to that end. We believe that these efforts will increase not only the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council but its credibility as well.

While considering the report of the Council, my delegation wishes to make some remarks on a few aspects of the work of the Council. As indicated by the greater number of formal and informal meetings held and of resolutions adopted, the Council had a very heavy agenda and an eventful year. We are highly disturbed to have witnessed developments in certain areas of the world that tested not only the effectiveness of the Council but also its credibility. In these developments, the Council was marginalized and was prevented from playing its proper role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It was also with a sense of uneasiness that we observed a unique pattern of finding a solution to an unfolding crisis in the Balkans through the mechanism of a regional organization. While we are fully aware of the success stories of some regional organizations and of their increasingly active role in the work of the Security Council in the past several years, especially in the realm of peace enforcement, the actions of regional organizations must, in our view, be clearly mandated and should not bypass the Security Council if the multilateral system for the maintenance of international peace and security is to be effectively maintained. There should not be any erosion of the Council's primary responsibility. To do otherwise, however strong the justification may be, is not defensible either legally or politically.

We note with appreciation that the Council was engaged in debates on themes other than crisis situations, such as children and armed conflict and protection of civilians in armed conflict, et cetera. Consideration of these themes as part of the work of the Council is a healthy trend that deserves our full support. We hope that these thematic debates will enhance the capacity of the Council to deal with the complex causes of crises on its agenda. We are pleased to see that these debates have recently become an important feature of the Council's agenda and that the Member States have actively participated in them.

I wish particularly to refer to debate on threats to peace and security by international terrorist acts. Terrorist acts are generally indiscriminate in nature and, accordingly, endanger not only the lives of those particularly targeted but also innocent lives. As such, these cowardly acts have become an emerging source of threats to peace and security. Therefore the adoption by the Council of resolution 1189 (1998) is a right step. It is also encouraging that by that resolution the Council shows that it is determined to eliminate international terrorism. We are convinced that only through

cooperation among States can there be effective and practical measures to prevent acts of terrorism.

We indeed appreciate the value of thematic debates as they contribute to the work of the Council. However, this does not necessarily mean that those debates should allow the Council to move into the area of issues or concerns not envisaged for it in the Charter. In this regard the provisions of the Charter are abundantly clear. Article 24 confers on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and states that "The Security Council shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations". We hope that in discharging its cardinal duties the Council will refrain from stretching its mandate beyond what is defined in the Charter and continue to focus primarily on the maintenance of international peace and security.

Furthermore, we feel that the measures adopted by the Security Council, especially those entailing the use of force or military elements, should conform to the principles of international law and take into account the principle of respect for sovereignty. It is also vitally important that measures with military elements should not be a convenient way of interfering in affairs that exclusively fall within the domestic jurisdiction of States.

The General Assembly has taken various steps to strengthen its link with the Security Council. I recall, in particular, Assembly resolutions 47/233, 48/264 and, last but not least, 51/193. On the other hand, the Security Council has, in response, taken many worthwhile measures. As a result, the process of interaction between the two organs with a view to enhancing the performance of the United Nations has gathered momentum, as attested by the improved format and content of the Council's annual reports and their timely submission to the General Assembly. We consider that it is important not to lose momentum. We hope that through these efforts of both organs, we will have a Council which is more transparent, open and accountable to all Members of the United Nations, on whose behalf it acts.

Mr. Francese (Italy) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I am particularly happy to speak to the Assembly this evening while you are presiding.

(*spoke in English*)

First of all, allow me to congratulate the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, this month's President of the Security Council, for his clear, precise and detailed presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. I also wish to compliment the Secretariat and its staff on an excellent job of preparing the document. Furthermore, my delegation is deeply appreciative of the endeavours of the members of the Security Council, all of them in favour of international peace and security. But it is particularly fitting today to express the most sincere feelings of appreciation and best wishes to the newly elected members for the years 2000 and 2001. Italy is sure that Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine will contribute new energy, increased creativity and better representativity to the supreme organ of the United Nations, an organ that draws great benefit from the frequent, regular rotation of its members.

Italy has repeatedly underlined that the General Assembly's discussion of the Security Council's report is essential to assuring effective coordination and interaction between the Council and the Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Charter. To achieve this, the report should provide an analytical, thorough and realistic picture of the work actually done by the Council. While much has been accomplished along these lines in recent years, a great deal remains to be done.

On this same occasion last year, Italy praised changes in the format of the report, for example the inclusion of a fifth part dedicated to the subsidiary organs of the Security Council such as the sanctions committees and the Tribunals on former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. I would be remiss not to express again this year our appreciation for a fine set of documents, which has been, we must acknowledge, improved by annexing the annual reports of the sanctions committees. It is encouraging to see that the Council has made it almost a uniform practice to distribute a document on the work of the Council at the end of each presidency, with the noticeable exception of the crucial month of May 1999. However, rather than a descriptive list of decisions, statements and resolutions, we would like the report to contain more of an in-depth analysis and a real assessment of the issues falling within the scope of the Council's activities.

For instance, already last year we proposed that the report be improved by providing more detailed information on meetings with troop-contributing countries. In sum, while the report deserves our praise as a useful reference tool, which is certainly valuable to the work of our missions, it is much harder to affirm that it

provides the General Assembly with an exhaustive instrument for assessing the work of the Security Council.

For such an assessment to be possible, the Assembly would need not only copies of the Council's decisions and resolutions, but also indications of substance regarding the proceedings that led to their adoption. The report should summarize the Council's debates on crisis areas, regional tensions, humanitarian emergencies and other subjects crucial to international peace and security, including human security, as well as regional and global stability. We should be provided not only with the text of the resolutions approved, but also with relevant information on the decision-making process that led to their adoption or that might have prevented other resolutions from being adopted. Everyone knows what was done, but we do not always know what was not done by the Security Council. Without this kind of information, we have no way of knowing whether the Council has expressed its full potential or simply struggled to contain divisions within its midst.

In discussing the report, we cannot avoid turning our attention, once again, to the issue of transparency and the working methods of the Security Council. Article 24 of the United Nations Charter affirms that members of the Organization

> "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf".

In agreeing to the Charter and its provisions, Members States did not abdicate their role in dealing with world security. For reasons of expediency and urgency, they simply delegated to the Council the primary task of ascertaining emerging threats and of taking immediate action to curb them, always acting on behalf of the entire membership of the United Nations.

Thus we believe that, as a general rule, the Security Council should convene in public formal session. Furthermore, briefings and reports by the Secretary-General and other high representatives of the Secretariat could in principle be delivered in meetings open to all Member States. We commend the fact that there were more formal meetings during the year under review than in the previous 12 months. Yet measures are still needed to ensure that such meetings are not dedicated only to the ritual approval of documents or to debate on matters of importance but of less urgency. More than 170 countries are informed of Council discussions only after they have taken place, and then obviously in an intermittent and incomplete way, via second-hand or third-hand news that travels from mission to mission.

International peace and security is a common good that is not the exclusive property of any one Member State or, for that matter, of those who sit in the Security Council. Council members, both permanent and non-permanent, must be held accountable for the positions they take on the important issues mandated to them. That accountability would be better provided by a more analytical and comprehensive format for the report, which, among other things, would allow Member States to undertake a real appraisal of the extent to which the Council's decision-making reflects both General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The report of the Security Council covers June 1998 to June 1999, a period in time characterized by numerous crises to which the international community felt it was its duty to respond. Allow me to state that -- while all threats to international peace and security, wherever they emerge, must, to the best of the Security Council's ability, be tackled equitably — it is Africa and the various regional crises in that continent that will, in the end, be the litmus test of the effectiveness of the United Nations. It is our firm conviction that, as regards Africa, the Security Council will have to increasingly deploy its political acumen and operational determination. The experience of the past must guide us to a better future.

It has been noted in the past months that the events in Kosovo showed a lack of unity among Council members that prevented the United Nations from playing a significant role in a major humanitarian crisis from its outset. As Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini stated in his address at the opening of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly:

> "stalemates and paralysis of intersecting vetoes must be avoided by anchoring even the strongest States to a system of rules [of behaviour] and principles [political if not legal]". (*A/54/PV.8*)

Italy remains deeply committed to a reform of the Security Council based on the experience of recent years, which has shown that the Council's ability to tackle international crises promptly and effectively is intrinsically regulated by the veto or the mere threat of its use.

We all recognize that to meet the new and manifold challenges regarding its institutional responsibility our Organization needs to adapt. In this context the reform of the Security Council is a crucial element. The Council needs to be made more representative, democratic and transparent. All regional groups and their members should feel that they are adequately mirrored in the composition of the Security Council and in its activities. The importance of each and every Member State being truly convinced that the Council is readily accountable and effectively responsive does not need to be underlined; this is main way of guaranteeing that the United Nations has the ways, the means and the political will to fulfil the lofty goal of maintaining international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.37

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 11 *(continued)*

Report of the Security Council (A/54/2)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jordán-Pando (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Nations is being tested as never before by the world's demands for action on problems which we all share, or which arouse widespread international concern. In an era of massive change, the United Nations too must change or be seen to fail.

The Security Council has to be part of that change; and this General Assembly debate on the annual report is an important opportunity to discuss that. The United Kingdom vigorously supports, and has a significant national stake in, a Security Council which lives up to its full responsibilities and achieves results in the maintenance of international peace and security. That is why the United Kingdom is active in the debate on reform, so that the Council can again enjoy the full confidence of the United Nations membership. This means, in our view, enlargement in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, with the allocation of new permanent seats reflecting the vital role of the non-industrial countries, as well as the contribution of Germany and Japan to the work of the Organization. And it also means greater transparency and communication in the daily work of the Council.

This year, after a period in which the Council did not consistently measure up to the Charter's expectations, there is a renewed determination to bring its weight and authority to bear. That includes a greater readiness to authorize new peacekeeping operations. On issues such as Sierra Leone, East Timor and Lockerbie, the United Kingdom has been extremely active in forging a more active and better targeted Security Council role. Even on the most controversial issues — I have in mind Iraq and Kosovo — where we had earlier judged that the Security Council had failed badly to generate a collective response, the United Kingdom has worked hard, and continues to work hard, to re-establish a central role for the Council.

The proof of success in such difficult areas will be in the final result: in the case of Kosovo, in the proper implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999); in the case of Iraq, in the adoption of a resolution which reconstitutes an active and productive United Nations presence in Iraq in both the humanitarian and the disarmament fields; and in the case of East Timer, in final independence and a good relationship with Indonesia.

Important as those subjects are, I believe that the greatest ongoing challenge to the Security Council is presented by the problems of Africa. On no other continent does conflict do such damage to political and economic structures and to ordinary people. Africans rightly call out for more international action; and non-Africans, above all in the developed world, must

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

respond. I understand the cries of double standards — that we are prepared to act decisively in other continents but not in Africa. But that is not the real story, and, while outside action is necessary, outside action alone is not enough. Africa, because both political structures and economic growth are often too weak, needs long-term assistance, not just short-term palliative action. The role of the latter is reduced if the former is not also put in place.

The United Kingdom, for one, has shown by its actions, and not just by its rhetoric, that we are committed to bringing greater stability and prosperity to the continent. If we are to address the long-term nature of African problems, we shall need a special kind of cooperation between African and international leaders; a redefinition of the real objectives of such cooperation; and deeper and more frequent communication. Direct links between the Organization of African Unity and the Security Council should be part of that. In the Central African Republic and in Sierra Leone we are beginning at last to make progress. Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola now need our urgent attention. The lessons we learn from these issues could then perhaps be applied to the distressingly hard cases of Sudan and Somalia.

In this call for more attention to African issues I sense a more general trend of international support for greater activism by the United Nations, not least when humanitarian catastrophes threaten. Kosovo, and more recently East Timor, have raised important questions about humanitarian action and its relation to the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The British Foreign Secretary told the General Assembly last month

> "that the first responsibility for reconciling internal conflict rests with the State in which that conflict arises. But we also have a shared responsibility to act when we are confronted with genocide, mass displacement of peoples or major breaches of humanitarian law". (*A/54/PV.5*)

As British Prime Minister Tony Blair said in a speech in Chicago in April this year, working out the conditions and identifying the circumstances when it is right in the modern world to intervene is the most pressing problem in foreign policy today. We believe that that debate, which is crucial to the Security Council's role in the maintenance of international peace and security, needs to be pursued as a matter of urgency. But we must avoid a sterile or an ideological confrontation. We are, after all, seeking to help ordinary people, not to attack systems. Before creating new machinery, we should widen and deepen our informal discussions. If we can build consensus — in the Security Council as well as elsewhere — around a pragmatic set of principles and conditions, it is more likely that the Security Council will be able to fulfil its responsibilities quickly and unanimously, without disturbing our respect for each other's values and cultures.

Finally, a few words about the issue of transparency. The United Kingdom strongly agrees on the need for the Council to carry out its responsibilities in a transparent manner. This year's report to the General Assembly is a further improvement: it now includes, for the first time, the annual reports of the sanctions committees, as an appendix.

But more could be done to improve transparency. During the period under review, the Council held 121 formal meetings, many of them to adopt resolutions without debate, and 239 consultations in the other room. Informal consultations continue to be necessary, particularly for more complex issues or for detailed negotiation. But the United Kingdom believes that more of the work done in informal consultations could and should be done at public meetings of the Council. There is a considerable appetite among the membership for more public discussion of substantive country-specific issues currently being dealt with by the Council. Greater transparency in this area can be achieved, if we are sensible, without diminishing the effectiveness of the Council's work. We hope to take this forward over the coming year, including during the United Kingdom presidency in December 1999.

A healthy and effective Security Council, achieving solid results, is indispensable to a healthy and effective United Nations system. The Security Council must work as an integral part of that system, connecting with the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and receiving in return positive inputs form those and other bodies. The United Nations is more than any nation, more than any council, more than any bloc. It is time we all agreed to release its real potential. The United Kingdom will work hard for that.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): My delegation has carefully examined the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly covering the period from June 1998 to June 1999. My delegation

appreciates the statement by Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, President of the Security Council for this month, introducing the report.

As we take stock of the state of affairs in the Security Council over the reporting period, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the members of the Council and the Secretary-General for their around-the-clock, year-round hard work in the discharge of their responsibilities as the Council dealt with a number of crisis situations from Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan to Rwanda, Congo and, now, East Timor and Sierra Leone.

With this in mind, allow me to discuss some aspects of the Council's activities to which we attach particular importance.

First, we cannot but admit that, in this world of unprecedentedly deepening interdependence, the Security Council over the past year had to face enormous challenges of tackling more than ever a much wider range of complex issues directly or indirectly related to international peace and security. One of the phenomena which reflected such a trend in the Council's work was that the Council organized more open discussions on a number of issues addressed as separate agenda items — namely, the protection of civilians in armed conflict; post-conflict peace-building; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; small arms; and children and armed conflict. Just two days ago the Council held a formal meeting on international terrorism at the initiative of the Russian delegation.

The issues that have traditionally been considered under the competence of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or other organs of the United Nations now require the attention of the Security Council to address those aspects falling practically within the purview of the Council. In this connection, we believe that the Council should make further efforts to build an effective partnership with the Assembly and other organs within the United Nations system in order to strengthen its relevance in meeting complex and multifaceted challenges facing the United Nations in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner.

In a similar vein, I would like to echo the suggestions made by my Egyptian colleague yesterday that, in accordance with Article 15 of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council should be called upon to submit not only an annual report but also special reports to the General Assembly on the important measures taken in the discharge of its mandate, as a step towards greater accountability of the Council to the general membership of the United Nations.

Secondly, we believe that the Council needs to make greater use of preventive action as an indispensable tool in coping with potential conflict situations. My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendation for more proactive use of a preventive monitoring presence in areas of potential conflict and the deployment of preventive peacekeeping missions. Based on this belief, we welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Trust Fund for Preventive Action and have continued to make contributions to the Fund since its inception in 1997. We call upon members who have not done so to make their financial and other resources available to this Fund in order to enhance the Secretary-General's ability to take preventive measures.

Thirdly, as the Council has progressively expanded its involvement in a wider range of divergent issues, one of the key areas of our debate on the Council's report in recent years has been on how to enhance transparency in the Council's work. Given the growing role and responsibility of the Council in dealing with crisis situations throughout the world, as demonstrated most recently in the cases of Kosovo and East Timor, the United Nations membership in general and non-members of the Council in particular which are parties directly or potentially involved in the situation, have an increasingly greater interest in taking part, in one way or another, in the Council's decision-making process.

Of course, we share the concern of some Members that transparency might undermine the efficiency of the conduct of business in the Council. However, when the decision-making process has financial or other implications for non-members of the Council, we believe that the need for efficiency should give way to transparency for the sake of mustering broader support of the general membership. Overall, we consider that the working method of the Council should be further rationalized in a manner conducive to ensuring greater transparency and better efficiency in its work.

In this connection, we appreciate some improvements made over the past year in the briefings given by the Presidency on the contents of the Council's informal consultations. First, such briefings to non-members are now given almost immediately after the informal consultations, ensuring real-time transparency in the work of the Council. Secondly, such briefings these

days contain more substantive matters, enabling constructive information-sharing among the general membership. We highly commend those Council Presidents who went the extra mile for their non-member counterparts to give real-time, first-hand information on a daily basis about the contents of the informal consultations, thus greatly contributing to the promotion of transparency in the work of the Council.

Let me now turn to several technical aspects of the annual report before us. First, we note with satisfaction that the report now carries with it an addendum of optional monthly assessments by former Presidents of the work of the Council during the reporting period. We believe that with this addendum the report has become a more substantive and analytical source of information on the work of the Council.

My delegation also welcomes the practice by which the Council Presidents over the past year provided the general membership with their respective monthly assessments of the Council's work. We hope that the practice of distributing the monthly assessment of the President promptly to the general membership as an official document will continue.

Secondly, we welcome the inclusion in Part V of the annual report of substantive information on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council as an integral part of the Council's report. The report now covers the activities of such subsidiary organs as the sanctions committees, the United Nations Special Commission and the International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the information contained therein has also been greatly improved. We are particularly satisfied that for the first time the Council has decided to incorporate the annual reports of the sanctions committees into the Council's report as appendices. As a long time advocate of such practices, we hope to see this continue in the future.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to reiterate its willingness to work closely with the President and with other delegations in our common effort to promote transparency, efficiency and rationalization of the working methods of the Council. With this in mind, I take the opportunity to assure the Assembly that my delegation will continue to do its utmost to contribute to the work of the upcoming meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, under the President's able guidance.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic):* My delegation is participating in the general discussion of the Security Council report because of its great importance. This is an opportunity for Member States to review the work of the Council and evaluate its activities in the performance of its duties related to preserving international peace and security.

When the General Assembly discussed previous reports of the Council, Member States made many remarks pertaining to the Council's working methods. Constructive proposals were made to improve its annual report in form and substance.

Before dealing with the contents of the present report, I should like to take the opportunity to express our appreciation to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, the President of the Security Council for this month, for his clear briefing on the Council's report.

The report before us was based mostly on the elements included in the note by the President of the Council of June 1997, with one additional chapter for the annual reports of the sanctions committees.

My delegation appreciates the initiatives taken by the Council and the Secretariat to improve the Council's working methods. Yet these improvements, in our opinion, are still limited. The reports should be further improved in order to ensure the Council's high efficiency and transparency.

The present report indicates that the Council has increased the number of open formal meetings compared with previous years. Due to the importance of the subjects discussed in those meetings, Member States should be informed in advance of the subjects to be discussed so as to be prepared prior to the decision-making process, not after it has been completed, since many States find themselves faced with previously prepared draft resolutions that tackle issues that are important to them.

We welcome consultations with troop-contributing countries, but we stress the importance of implementing the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter, which provides that non-members of the Council may participate in the discussions if the interests of those countries are specially affected.

The report mentions that the Council held 239 closed consultation meetings and gives the dates and the

reports discussed in them. It also states that they lasted for a total of 511 hours, but does not include, even briefly, the opinions voiced by members of the Council during those meetings. This is a source of major concern to us. We understand that the work of a limited group of States could in some instances be useful in facilitating the search for a solution to the conflicts before the Council, but we object to the excessive reliance on informal consultations that could destroy the transparency of the Council. The consultations prevent the overwhelming majority of Member States from participating in discussions of the issues. What is of interest for the international community is not the number of meetings or hours, but the content of the discussions.

We would like here to make the following important points.

First, when did the Council begin holding such meetings, and why? The Council is master of its own decisions, but it is also possible, to an extent, that it could make decisions surreptitiously, without the knowledge of the international community or without its participation. The Charter provides for the exact opposite.

Secondly, we would like to stress the importance of holding more open and public meetings, with the participation of the States parties, to discuss the issues on the Council's agenda.

We believe that the Council should be guided by the opinions and proposals of Member States, and therefore we are not convinced that the General Assembly should only take note of the Council's report, in view of its extreme importance. We believe that Members should be given the opportunity to form their opinions regarding the report and to present their recommendations to the Council in accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter.

We further believe that it is unacceptable that the Council should continue to use provisional rules of procedure that are more than half a century old and whose provisions do not apply to the informal consultations that have become the most used framework for the Council's activities.

The Security Council held many meetings devoted to discussing the problems of certain African countries — a fact that we appreciate. However, it is a source of concern to us that the Council deals with other regional problems, takes appropriate measures and produces efficient and effective resolutions, but only pays lip service to, and expresses the best of intentions about, African issues.

We believe that the Council should take practical steps to address African problems, taking into account the priorities of the African countries themselves, and coordinate its work with them to resolve these problems. This approach would break the cycle of violence that destroys the security of many countries of the African continent and would enable peace to be established and sustainable development to be implemented.

The period under review is very important in the context of the history of the problems that the Council has addressed in different parts of the world. We realize that the Council bears the major responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, but the Charter also provides for the General Assembly to participate in laying down the general guidelines that would help achieve that purpose. If the Security Council cannot tackle serious problems independently, it should cooperate with the General Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, to solve many of them.

The Security Council's report tackles, in chapter 16, the report of the sanctions committee concerning the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people. In connection with lifting those sanctions, in implementation of paragraph 16 of Security Council resolution 883 (1993), paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1192 (1998) clearly states that Libya has fulfilled its obligations in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Yet the United States has prevented the Council from taking a decision to lift the sanctions. The United States Government has used three arguments to justify that position. First, it says that Libya supports terrorism. The Secretary-General's report refutes that claim completely, and the facts of the matter assert that Libya has not supported terrorism; it has, rather, supported the legitimate struggle of national liberation movements, especially in African countries. Secondly, it is said, Libya has not cooperated with the Scottish tribunal. Libya has indeed cooperated, and we have clearly stated on several occasions that we are more than willing to cooperate with that tribunal to have the sanctions lifted.

Thirdly, and most curiously, the United States claims that we should pay damages to the families of the victims of Pan Am 103, even before the issue has been settled in court. We can pay damages only when a court decision is taken. The American claim undermines the rules of international law, as well as human rights. It is

a widely known legal principle that a suspect is innocent until proven guilty. The claim of the United States erodes human rights by completely denying the possibility of the innocence of the suspects. Using the logic of that argument, we could demand damages for all the suffering that we have undergone for seven years and that has caused us human losses and tremendous material losses that reached billions of dollars.

When the Members of the United Nations mandated the Security Council to work on their behalf, they presupposed that the Council would take into account their opinions and positions with regard to the issues under consideration. With regard to the situation I have just mentioned, one can clearly see that a single State has disregarded the positions of most members of the Organization.

This is a very dangerous trend that should be checked. One cannot disregard the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference — all of which have formally and repeatedly requested the immediate and total lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people. They are all convinced that Libya has fulfilled all its obligations towards Security Council demands regarding the Lockerbie case. A single State cannot stand in the way of the will of the international community. Preserving the fait accompli will enforce the will of a single State and not the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to express my delegation's gratitude to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and President of the Security Council for the month of October, for his valuable presentation to the Assembly of the Council's annual report. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Secretariat for the efforts it made in presenting a comprehensive and timely report.

This report, which is issued in compliance with a duty enshrined in the Charter, has a very important ritual significance. It symbolizes the cooperation that should exist between two bodies, the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is also the product of the legal fiction according to which the Council acts on behalf of all the members of the Organization. These circumstances alone would justify its existence. But beyond performing a ritual function between the two bodies, the report should also achieve the basic objective for which it was created, namely, to inform. We can therefore ask ourselves whether its present format allows it to carry out that objective.

In order to answer that question we would first have to spell out what type of information the Member States, on whose behalf the members of the Council act, require. Secondly, we would have to examine what other means of information are available to them. From the replies to these questions we will be able to determine whether the report meets the Member States' requirements for information.

Without trying to be comprehensive, I would venture to reply that with regard to information, what we would like to know about first is the existence of situations that endanger international peace and security. We would like to be informed in a timely manner about such situations and know what the motives and elements are that characterize such conflicts — for instance, who the parties in conflict are, what the dimensions and political challenges of the conflict are, what the humanitarian situation and the status of the conflict on the ground are, and so on. In this regard, it would be very important for the States that are not members of the Council to have timely access to any information that could be provided by the Secretariat, the special envoys and personal representatives of the Secretary-General and the parties to the conflict.

Information should serve one objective, and that is to enable countries to assess what is taking place, take positions, intervene and contribute to the solving of conflicts. In reality, however, the information provided by the annual report does not meet that need. The annual nature of the report, which appears long after the events it deals with have occurred, means that its interest is primarily historic.

Secondly, we Member States are interested in finding out how the Council is handling a conflict. In that regard, we would like to know what alternatives are being considered and what positions are being taken by the members of the Council. This is particularly important in the case of the non-permanent members, whom we elect every year.

The legal fiction that the Council is acting on our behalf should come closer to the truth. We believe in an ideal situation in which the Member States can aspire to

a feeling of sharing a particular political sensitivity with those who represent us in the Council.

With regard to the Latin American region, I would like to place on the record our gratitude to the delegations of Argentina and Brazil for the tremendous effort they made to brief us during their period of service on the Security Council.

The fact that the permanent members are not elected does not exempt them from the duty to provide an increasing flow of information to the non-member States. Once again, the legal fiction that they act on our behalf should progressively converge with reality. Although it is true that the permanent members of the Security Council are not the object of scrutiny, that does not free them from the duty — at least from a moral and practical point of view — to be aware of the feelings of the other members of the Organization, on whose behalf they act. These feelings can only be accurate if the Member States are well informed as to what is happening in the Council.

The process of providing information does not end with the annual report we are considering today. Providing information is a permanent exercise that should take place at all levels and stages. Obviously, information will be better and more abundant where transparency prevails, and in this regard there is a great deal to be done.

When we served on the Council in 1997, we had the honour of signing a document, along with the other nine non-permanent members, suggesting a series of measures to improve the work of the Council, particularly aspects relating to transparency. Some of those measures have already been taken, while others have not. Many ideas designed to increase the transparency of the Council's work are being discussed in detail in the open-ended working group on the reform of the Council. It is important to make progress in this area. In order to achieve this it is essential that the permanent members be less passive and try to adapt themselves to new realities.

With regard to transparency, any progress that has been made is the result of pressure from the rest of the membership. That is why we would like the permanent members to be more energetic in developing ways to enable all of us to be better informed about what is happening in the Council. The permanent members sometimes seem to confuse the trivial with the fundamental. What is certain is that greater transparency will in no way affect their privileges; on the contrary, it will give greater legitimacy to their actions, as it does in democratic societies. It is not healthy that a feeling should develop that they are separated from us by an ocean of incomprehension. That situation should be ended in the interests of the United Nations and of international peace and security.

I end on an optimistic note. Although the report does not completely satisfy our need for information, we must recognize that in the past two years progress has been made, in particular as a result of the inclusion of the assessments former Presidents have made at the end of their presidency, and we are grateful to those who have done so. We urge the Council to continue to explore, through the Working Group on documentation and procedure, ways of improving the report by making it more substantive and analytical.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): I welcome this opportunity to consider the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. I wish to thank the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, the President of the Council for this month, for presenting the report.

My delegation attaches great importance to the activities of the Security Council, as they have a bearing on the interests and well-being of the entire international community.

In the recent past the Council has shown its preparedness to respond positively to the call of the majority of Member States for an increased flow and greater sharing of information with non-members of the Security Council. During the past year interested Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Security Council were able to participate in some of the Council's open debates. Additionally, their understanding has been enriched by the daily briefings and monthly reports of the Security Council President. These are encouraging signs of a move towards a more open and transparent Security Council. My delegation therefore wishes to encourage the Council to continue these activities.

While this positive trend is appreciated, the Council needs to do a good deal more to meet calls by the general membership for greater transparency and accountability in the way in which it conducts its affairs. Like its predecessors, this report lists facts without incorporating information about the deliberations of the Council in the consultations of the whole. Furthermore, the report does not provide an analysis of the matters considered in those

consultations or of any of the reasons that might have led to the Council's taking certain decisions rather than others.

The Security Council has been described by some Members as a private negotiating forum. However, this description ignores the fact that, under the Charter, the Council acts on behalf of the entire general membership of the United Nations. Closed-door meetings will therefore continue to reinforce the negative view that the Council neglects its accountability to other members of the Organization. The Zambian delegation joins previous speakers who have called for the Council to meet in open meetings more frequently.

The report also shows that the Council dealt with a great number of subjects affecting the African continent. However, it is one thing to hear and document reports about such situations, but quite another to summon the political will to do something about the crises. The action proposed by the Security Council on Sierra Leone is appreciated, but the Council is not acting quickly on the problem of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, the President of Zambia, in his capacity as mediator on behalf of the countries of the Southern African Development Community, made important proposals to the Security Council on 21 September 1999 relative to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those proposals are still before the Council. I must emphasize that the apparent slow response on the part of the Security Council may lead to a breakdown in the confidence and the hope that has been built up by the ceasefire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. No one wants a vacuum to develop as that would ultimately lead to a recurrence of war and further violence.

In fulfilling its role under the Charter for the maintenance of peace and security in the world, the Security Council should endeavour to be seen to be consistent in its reactions to crises, wherever they occur. The Security Council should move quickly to erase the impression of double standards by according equal treatment to all crisis situations in the world.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): On 10 September last year, the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Nicholas Morris, briefed the members of the Security Council on the situation then prevailing in Kosovo. Mr. Morris had just arrived from the region, and he gave a very vivid description of the critical humanitarian plight of the people of Kosovo. He made the suffering of the Kosovars seem very real in the consultation room. I was presiding over those consultations as President of the Security Council at the time, and I had the feeling that no one left that room untouched by what we had heard. Shortly afterwards the Council adopted resolution 1199 (1998), which demanded that immediate steps be taken to avert the impending humanitarian catastrophe. Further action would otherwise be considered by the Council.

I have taken that particular example from the report we are discussing today because I believe that it is an appropriate starting point for addressing some of the crucial issues regarding the work of the Security Council during the year covered by that report. I will deal in particular with two such issues: the credibility of the Security Council, and the openness of the Council; they are, indeed, related.

At the time of Mr. Morris's briefing, the Security Council was very much on top of what was going on in Kosovo. Many delegations worked hard to maintain that order. We believed that the situation in Kosovo, which came to be characterized by massive violations of human rights, with clear implications for the security of the region as a whole, merited resolute action by the Security Council. However, mainly due to the possibility of a veto, such action proved out of reach even as the heinous acts of "ethnic cleansing" accelerated.

Another moment in the Council which is vivid in my memory was on 16 December 1998. The Security Council again held informal consultations of the whole, dealing, as so often in the past, with Iraq. We were assembled to discuss the latest report of the United Nations Special Commission regarding flagrant violations by Iraq of its obligations under United Nations resolutions. Halfway through our discussions, the meeting was interrupted, as we were informed by people coming in from the so-called "silent room", where they had been watching CNN, that unilateral action was already being taken by two States, both permanent members of the Security Council.

I could add to those two examples a third. I am referring to the veto of yet another permanent member, cast at the height of tensions in the Balkans, in effect putting an end to the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia — one of the more successful preventive United Nations missions.

I have given those three examples because to my mind they reflect situations which, for different reasons, have contributed to a debate that cannot be ignored. Kosovo, Iraq and UNPREDEP represent three issues where the credibility of the Security Council has been seriously questioned. For those of us — I believe that we are many — who put our trust in the United Nations as the ultimate upholder of peace and human dignity, and who firmly believe that the Security Council must carry out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, this debate is a very serious one.

One key question today is how the credibility of the Council can be restored. To my delegation, the answer lies in how the members of the Security Council make the best use of its full potential. In our view, this entails several steps: first, to take action earlier. True preventive work is still virtually absent from the Council agenda, and as a consequence the Council is confronted with urgent emergencies and will constantly be perceived to be doing too little too late. Better use must be made of preventive tools, many of which are provided by the Charter. Prevention, of course is a question both of information and of political will. The Secretary-General has a key role to play in alerting the Council to potential conflicts as early as possible. Using this information, the Security Council, as well as the Secretariat, could focus more on identifying specific options available to them before the conflicts hit the headlines: by quiet and public means, through activities in the field and through action here in New York. Let us not forget, however, that the key challenge and responsibility is that of mobilizing true political will to act.

Secondly, it is the view of my Government that the security of the individual must be regarded as being as important as the security of States. Human security ought to be promoted, for example, by putting more emphasis on the protection of civilians. Mandates devised by the Security Council should be calibrated to the real tasks at hand, and there should be no shying away from the real needs when it comes to manpower and rules of engagement robust enough to protect the personnel who have been sent out. In the case of sanctions, another Council issue, more can also be done to avoid negative humanitarian side-effects, in the first place through targeted sanctions. The trend of revitalizing the sanctions committees to make the sanctions instrument an effective tool, as has been the case in Angola, is very welcome.

Thirdly, when decisions for action are taken by the Security Council, we as Member States have a clear responsibility in the follow-up through rapid deployment of adequate personnel, both civilian and military.

Fourthly, peace and security is a matter of global concern. The Security Council must act even-handedly and with the same commitment all over the world. It cannot afford to be perceived as promoting double standards. Some very important decisions were indeed taken at the end of last year regarding core issues pertaining to peace and the prevention of conflict in Africa. These range from the enhancement of regional peacekeeping capacities to curbing illegal flows of small arms. But such decisions may be of a more generic nature; they should also be translated into true political will of the Security Council to act in specific cases — in Africa as much as in other places.

Our fifth point relates to the veto. The veto should not be allowed to block the Security Council from shouldering its responsibilities. This issue will indeed be discussed under another agenda item here in the General Assembly and perhaps later on in a working group, but a number of interesting suggestions regarding the possibility of arriving at agreements on how to restrict the use of the veto were made during the general debate, some of which would indeed contribute to increasing the credibility of the Council.

Finally, the same is true regarding the composition of the Security Council. To us, an enlarged Council better reflecting the general membership of the United Nations would act with greater authority and increased credibility, and thereby increase the security of both individuals and States.

Allow me once again to come back to that briefing by Mr. Morris one year ago in the Security Council consultations room regarding the humanitarian situation in Kosovo. That meeting also highlighted, to us, the need for the Security Council to be more open to outside expertise and influence. More can be done by Council members to allow parties concerned, United Nations agencies and relevant non-governmental organizations to contribute to its deliberations on specific issues. Also, the Security Council would be well served to build on a practice that has been developed during the last year more often to allow the Secretary-General or his representatives, Chairpersons of sanctions committees and others to brief the Council in open meetings. This is not only a question of democracy and transparency — which are important enough — but also a way for the Security Council to better get messages across to the general

membership. We feel that measures to involve the membership to a greater extent in the work of the Council will also contribute to enhancing its authority. We realize and understand full well the need for Council members to deliberate behind closed doors when specific situations so require, but we also expect substantial briefings to follow such meetings. Gradual improvements in this regard have been duly noted during the past year.

I have mentioned but a few, and for the Security Council, perhaps more problematic issues. But before I conclude I would also like to put on record due credit to the Council for its efforts on several other questions on its agenda, as reflected in the report before the Assembly.

The Security Council has indeed asserted itself in many areas. In East Timor the Council has shown commitment in support of the process, led by the Secretary-General, for the East Timorese people to have their say in the future of that territory. Peace has also come closer for the peoples of Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. The issue of Libya has progressed considerably this year. At the same time, we hope to see renewed efforts regarding Iraq, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the very tense situation prevailing in Burundi, among other matters. The endurance and the commitment of the Security Council will be thoroughly tested.

An important debate was started by the Secretary-General when on the opening day of the general debate he delivered a statement on his annual report on the work of the Organization, regarding how far the responsibility of the Security Council goes when it comes to humanitarian emergencies, and when it is faced with massive breaches of human rights or other crimes against civilians. We have put forward our views on this matter, and they coincide very much with those of the Secretary-General. Here I would just like to say that we surely realize that the Security Council may not be able to resolve all conflicts. But we as members of the United Nations — and all of us as human beings — have reason to expect that the Council will at all times manifest a serious effort to stop human suffering resulting from threats to peace, no matter where they occur.

That is indeed a heavy burden that falls on its 15 members. We know that the Charter says that they carry out their obligations on behalf of all States Members of this Organization. Therefore, they must also be able to count on the support of us all when they take on this immense task.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): I would like at the outset to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey V. Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for introducing the report of the Security Council. That report, document A/54/2, summarizes the enormous workload the Council carried from 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999. The 121 open meetings, the 239 informal consultations, the 72 resolutions and the more than 90 reports considered by the Council indicate an increase in the volume of the Council's work and at the same time evidence the increased expectations of the international community with regard to the Council's responses to conflicts and disputes.

Following the 1997 decision of the Council, an effort was indeed made again this year to enhance the analytical nature of the report by incorporating brief personal assessments by members of the Council of the months during which they served as President; these assessments are not binding on the Council. An innovation in this year's report is the inclusion of reports of the sanctions committees as an appendix.

While we view these additions to the report as efforts towards further transparency in the work of the Council and towards greater participation by the United Nations membership at large, we feel that still more can be done, especially in the following areas.

First, more information is needed on the proceedings of the informal meetings of the Council. Full transparency, which is as important as efficiency, should be seen in the light of accountability. In this regard, we support the idea of convening consultation meetings of the Security Council open to the general membership.

Second, in the voting procedures of the Council, there are occasions where the Council votes on a draft resolution and proceeds thereafter to debate the very resolution which has already been adopted. We believe that, except in extraordinary situations of urgency, which are very rare indeed, the sequence should be reversed, especially on issues which usually draw a considerable number of non-member speakers. Such a sequence should also enhance the positive impressions made by the United Nations on viewers of the Council's proceedings.

Third, while we understand the beneficial effects of informal consultation meetings, we feel they should be

used sparingly, not routinely as they are today, when they far surpass in number the regular open meetings. The Council must do more towards increasing the participation of non-members of the Council in its deliberations. Closed meetings frustrate such participation.

Fourth, there should be more restraint on the part of the Council with regard to issues which may be considered to fall within the domain of the General Assembly. Expansion of the activities of the Security Council in matters of peace and security is a welcome phenomenon. The expansion of the activities of the Security Council, however, in issues which may be within the domain of the General Assembly does not conform to the division of work between the two most important organs of the United Nations. The need for close coordination between them cannot be overemphasized.

Fifth, we are willing to consider and discuss the proposal by Germany of reporting to the General Assembly the reasons for the use of a veto.

Sixth, we support the Indian proposal as to the incorporation in the annual report of an assessment by the Council itself of the usefulness and helpfulness of its actions.

Seventh, we reiterate our belief that greater collaboration between the United Nations and the regional organizations is needed, as provided under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

Eighth, sanctions cause economic losses, creating problems for neighbouring States and for all those countries that have to observe them. The Security Council needs to become more sensitive to these problems, as well as to the general humanitarian impact of sanctions, and should therefore be more selective so as to affect those targeted and not innocent people.

We attach great importance to the item under consideration. The Security Council, being the United Nations organ entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and whose decisions are binding, as determined by the Charter, plays a key role which affects the international community as a whole. Though more needs to be done, we are happy to concede that progress has been made in recent years towards ameliorating the working methods of the Council, especially in transparency. The evidence of the progress made by the Open-ended Working Group on the working methods of the Council is therefore obvious.

The delegation of Cyprus will have more to say on the working methods of the Council during the discussion of the item entitled "Equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters." We would just like to state at present that an equitable increase in the Council's permanent and non-permanent seats, so as to render it representative, will go a long way towards earning the confidence of the general membership.

Representing a country whose problem remains inscribed on the agenda of this body and on the agenda of the Security Council, and expecting a just solution, I would like to express the appreciation of my Government to the members of the Council for their contribution and to congratulate the five newly elected members, while pledging at the same time our cooperation and full support.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I wish to join other delegations in thanking the President of the Security Council, Mr. Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his lucid and concise introduction of this year's report of the Security Council (A/54/2) covering the period 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999.

The annual discussion of the report of the Security Council clearly illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council as the United Nations seeks to pursue the cause of international peace and security. Before addressing the substance of the report, allow me to make a few comments on some procedural matters.

My delegation has noted that considerable effort has been made to give effect to the principle of transparency. Open debates of the Security Council have to a large extent allowed Member States to participate in the deliberations and to be directly informed about the proceedings of the Council. We welcome this development, and we wish to offer for consideration the fact that further transparency could be facilitated if there existed a mechanism allowing countries which are involved in disputes to brief members of the Security Council during informal meetings.

The regular statements to the press, as well as the briefings for non-members, have also been very useful. We especially appreciate the availability of the Council's programme of work and statements made to the press on some Missions' Web sites. The monthly reports of the Presidents of the Council have proved to be an effective medium through which the activities of the Council can

be reviewed. It would be useful, however, if these reports could be more analytical in content instead of being a compilation of documents.

It was gratifying to note that efforts continue to be made to improve the methods of work of the Security Council. We also note that non-papers have been presented by past and present members of the Council aimed at improving the Council's work. The measures suggested in these non-papers, we believe, could serve as a basis for action by the Council.

The Charter of the United Nations has ascribed to the Security Council the primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security. While one agrees that collective security and responding to crises and emergencies must be the major focus of its activities, we concur with the observation made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in paragraph 58 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1), that "reaction, and not prevention, has been the dominant Security Council approach in dealing with conflict over the years." Preventive action by the United Nations encompasses a broad range of political, economic, social and humanitarian measures aimed at averting or de-escalating the development of conflict.

My delegation is heartened that in recent years, the Council has shown increased interest in tackling these issues in extensive debates on post-conflict peace-building and on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as through the endorsement of a range of conflict-prevention measures. We welcome the continuous dialogue between the Security Council and the Secretary-General on preventive measures and encourage cooperation between the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations.

We note that threats to peace have become more or less pandemic. Ethnic strife and political divisiveness have continued to fuel internal conflict, leading to heavy loss of life, economic disruption and regional instability. The Security Council cannot afford to divorce itself from this phenomenon and must pronounce itself in pragmatic ways.

As was clearly articulated in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, the past decade has been one of tension and difficulty for the United Nations in fulfilling its collective security mandate. We note that earlier this year the Security Council was precluded from intervening in the Kosovo crisis by profound disagreements between Council members over whether such an intervention was legitimate. The dilemma we face is the search for an acceptable threshold.

When is the level of human suffering within a country of such a magnitude as to warrant international action? Questions concerning the principle of intervention, the use of force, the scale of military enforcement and the role of the Security Council are all relevant. The debates on these questions have revealed differing perspectives, as well as elements of consensus, on the applicable principles of international law. In recent times we have witnessed atrocities committed as a result of the practice of ethnic cleansing, as communities rise up against each other to settle old grievances. We must all continue to condemn these practices and understand the need for some kind of action to halt such excesses, which violate international humanitarian norms.

By the same token, however, we believe that the principles of international law affecting sovereignty and the use of force cannot be ignored. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jamaica, in his address to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly advocated the adoption of an approach which

> "has the confidence of the international community whereby diplomatic and any necessary enforcement action is taken or authorized by the multilateral institutions entrusted with safeguarding international peace and security." *(A/54/PV.17)*

In this regard, we share the view of the Secretary-General that

> "enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations." *(A/54/1, para. 66)*

African issues have dominated the agenda of the Security Council for some time. The report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace in Africa has been the springboard for discussion and action on African issues. We share the concern of the Secretary-General that too little attention is given to the conflicts arising in Africa, despite the enormous toll in loss of life, disruptions and suffering resulting from armed insurgencies and inter-State conflicts.

In addition to the substance of the report, Jamaica attaches great importance to the reform of the Security Council. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group in the conduct of its extensive discussions. Those discussions have generated many concrete ideas and proposals pertaining to the decision-making process of the Council, as well as to its structure. We believe that some of these discussions could contribute to making the Council more effective and efficient. We are therefore disappointed that further progress has not been achieved and that the realization of the reform of the Security Council remains a distant hope.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that the effectiveness of the Security Council can be measured only by its ability to address the challenges to international peace and security. The Council must be geared to the current realities of the international community while upholding the principles enshrined in the Charter.

Let me take this opportunity to convey my Government's sincere appreciation to the members of the General Assembly for electing Jamaica to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2000-2001. Please be assured that Jamaica will seek to effectively discharge its responsibilities as a non-permanent member of the Council during our tenure.

Mr. Ibrahim (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish first of all to thank the current President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, for having clearly and succinctly presented the report of the Security Council for the period 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for its efforts in the preparation of this important document, and the members of the Security Council for their great efforts in tackling the difficult task entrusted to them by the Charter and the Member States. I wish to congratulate Tunisia, Mali, Bangladesh, Ukraine and Jamaica for having been elected non-permanent members of the Council.

The presentation of this report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session reflects the solid ties between these two bodies and their shared interest in peacekeeping and international security. The report reviews in detail the items considered by the Council and its various activities, as well the activities of the Council's subsidiary bodies.

While we welcome the report and appreciate the improvements in the quality of the information provided and the addition of sections, such as the one on the work of the sanctions committees, we feel that the level of analysis must be increased so that Member States can be given more detailed information as well as an evaluation of the work of the Council. This evaluation should include a discussion of the effectiveness of past Council actions in dealing with conflicts. Such analysis is essential. We also insist that the General Assembly be given the opportunity to play a more active role in the area of international peace and security.

Past experience has shown that sanctions imposed by the Security Council against certain countries have not met the Council's stated objectives. The sanctions have caused enormous damage and harm and have led to horrible human tragedies, as has been the case in Iraq.

While confirming our recognition of the right of the Security Council to impose sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter, we feel that greater caution must be exercised in the adoption of such measures. Such consideration should focus, *inter alia*, on the consequences of the sanctions for the States concerned as well as for third parties. This need is clearly stipulated in the Charter.

The Republic of Yemen has close historical ties to Africa, and thus we are concerned about the deterioration of the situation in the Horn of Africa and in both Central and East Africa. The leaders of my country continue to strive to reach solutions in cooperation with our friendly brotherly countries. In this respect, my country calls upon the Security Council to give great attention to the conflicts in Africa, to help put an end to humanitarian catastrophes and to support the efforts of the Organization of African Unity to achieve that goal.

The Republic of Yemen supports the goal of reforming the United Nations, the Security Council in particular. Therefore we support the Open-ended Working Group. We urge the Working Group to conclude its work as soon as possible, bearing in mind the ongoing critical changes that are taking place in the world.

We hope that, at the threshold of the third millennium, the Security Council will become a more open, democratic and transparent body, faithfully reflecting the aspirations and hopes of the Member States and of the world's peoples for a better future for all mankind, so that all may enjoy peace, security and stability.

Mr. Balzan (Malta): The significant number of delegations choosing to speak on this agenda item illustrates the interest and paramount importance attached to the report of the Security Council as the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security — a responsibility that reflects in the clearest of manners the objectives set forth in the Charter that gave birth to this Organization. The Security Council as originally envisaged was meant to ensure that the cause of peace would be more effectively served by a smaller group of States, sitting permanently or temporarily on the Council, not in their own interests, but in the interest of the international community. The debate on this report is another expression of the accountability that these members owe to the general membership of the Organization as a result of that greater responsibility.

The members of the secretariat of the Security Council deserve our thanks for the arduous work that must have gone into the publication of this voluminous document. The inclusion in the report of the Council Presidents' monthly assessments and press statements make the document more informative and complete. Nevertheless, it will remain difficult for the document to satisfy the non-members' interest in gaining an understanding of the rationale behind the actions of the Council so long as it continues to reflect its over-reliance on informal consultations as its primary method of work.

The involvement of the general membership of the Organization in the workings of the Security Council remains hampered by the practice whereby the real debates and deliberations take place behind closed doors, while only the official adoption of the resolutions takes place in open sessions of the Council. While Malta welcomes the few deviations from this method of work witnessed in the past year, it is hoped that they will he more frequent in the years to come. The adoption of a practice whereby briefings from the Secretariat are delivered in open Chamber would perhaps be a positive move in the right direction. In this context, Malta welcomes the views expressed by the delegation of Ireland.

For what is to be gained from keeping the often unpleasant details of the situation on the ground from the general membership of the Organization? Undoubtedly, the divulging of this information can only help non-members to better understand the eventual decisions of the Council. It would also add to the conviction with which non-members conform to those decisions which they are duty-bound to implement and would enhance the involvement and support they already give to the work of the Council in places such East Timor and Kosovo.

Taking action in areas experiencing precarious humanitarian situations is in the nature of the Security Council and its onerous mandate. At times, even positive and necessary action on the part of the Security Council may instigate population movements with humanitarian implications. The open debates on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations, children in armed conflict and the protection of civilians in armed conflict are a welcome development that further sensitizes decision-makers on these issues.

Indeed, too many of the Security Council's less satisfactory endeavours in the past year relate to the African continent. The case of Angola illustrates a level of ineffectiveness of the Security Council that is cause for concern. Not only were several resolutions on the situation sidelined by the parties to which they were addressed, but the sanctions that were imposed were not duly implemented. The United Nations Mission there was eventually forced to abandon the field. It is hoped that the new initiative on Angola taken by the Council last week will meet with greater success. If it is to do so, the Council will require firm leadership and conviction in its actions. It will also need to provide the swift and solid support that it has shown itself capable of mustering elsewhere. African members expect no less, especially as comparisons continue to be drawn to actions taken in other regions.

In concluding, may I extend our congratulations to the representatives of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine upon their election to the non-permanent membership of the Security Council and wish them every success in the discharge of their responsibilities.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/54/2?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 11.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.38

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

38th plenary meeting
Monday, 25 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland), Vice-President took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 3 (*continued*)

Credentials of representatives to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly

(b) Report of the Credentials Committee (A/54/475)

The Acting President: The draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 14 of its report reads as follows:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Having considered* the report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendation contained therein,

"*Approves* the report of the Credentials Committee."

We shall now take action on the recommendation of the Credentials Committee set forth in paragraph 14 of its report.

The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/6).

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to make a statement in explanation of vote.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mahmoudi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am taking the floor to express our reservation regarding the part of the report of the Credentials Committee contained in document A/54/475 that pertains to the credentials of Israel.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 3.

Agenda item 7

Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General (A/54/398)

The Acting President: As members are aware, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is mandated to notify the General Assembly of matters

99-86233 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

relative to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Security Council and of matters with which the Council has ceased to deal.

In this connection, the General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/54/398.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 16

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of twenty-nine members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme

The Acting President: Pursuant to General Assembly decision 43/406, the Assembly will proceed to the election of 29 members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 1999.

The 29 outgoing members are Algeria, Australia, Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Finland, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Italy, the Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Samoa, Slovakia, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Those States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that after 1 January 2000, the following States will still be members of the Governing Council: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, China, the Comoros, Cuba, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Nigeria, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United States of America, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

Therefore, those 29 States are not eligible in this election.

As the Assembly is aware, in accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations.

However, I would like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should be standard unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chairmen of the regional groups as follows:

For the eight seats of the African States, the eight endorsed candidates are Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Senegal and Uganda.

For the seven seats of the Asian States, the seven endorsed candidates are India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Samoa, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

For the three seats of the Eastern European States, the three endorsed candidates are Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Slovakia.

For the five seats of the Latin American and Caribbean States, the five endorsed candidates for the five seats are the Bahamas, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Suriname.

For the six seats of the Western European and other States, the six endorsed candidates are Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Since the number of candidates endorsed by the African States, the Asian States, the Eastern European States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to elect those

candidates as members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term beginning on 1 January 2000?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The following 29 States have thus been elected members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term beginning on 1 January 2000: Bahamas, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, Suriname, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme.

This concludes our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 16.

Agenda item 17

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/54/107)

The Acting President: As indicated in document A/54/107, since the terms of office of Chile, Fiji, France, Gabon, Japan, Namibia and the Russian Federation will expire on 31 December 1999, it is necessary for the President of the General Assembly to appoint, during the current session, seven members to fill the resulting vacancies. The members so appointed will serve for a period of three years beginning on 1 January 2000.

After consultations with the Chairmen of the groups of African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States as well as Western European and other States, I have appointed Chile, Equatorial Guinea, France, Japan, Namibia, the Philippines and the Russian Federation as members of the Committee on Conferences, with effect from 1 January 2000.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of these appointments?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 29

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/308)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.12)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.12.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): In the context of the General Assembly's consideration of agenda item 29, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference", I have the pleasant duty of introducing, on behalf of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), draft resolution A/54/L.12.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution begins by recalling the various relevant resolutions and recommendations recognizing the legal existence of the Organization of the Islamic Conference as a subject of international law, a reality that formed the basis of resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, by which the General Assembly decided to invite the Organization of the Islamic Conference to participate in the sessions and the work of the Assembly in the capacity of observer.

The draft then spells out the reasons for, and above all the benefits of, the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, because both pursue the same ideal and the same goals. These are, at the political level, the quest for peace with a view to bringing about a better and more united world; at the economic level, the promotion of genuine development for the benefit of all countries and all peoples, which is a *sine qua non* condition for the establishment of the true collective security to which we

all aspire; and, at the social level, human freedom through the promotion of human security.

In its operative part, the draft resolution first takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General, which encourages the United Nations and the OIC to continue to strengthen their cooperation in view of the increasingly important role played by the OIC in the international arena, in particular with respect to the implementation of the objectives of the United Nations in the areas of security, disarmament, decolonization, human rights, economic development and technical cooperation.

In this connection, the draft recommends that in order to render this complementarity even more effective and harmonious, the United Nations and the OIC should strongly encourage meetings, particularly high-level meetings, between the leaders of both organizations. It recommends also that, if possible, they consider convening next year a conference of the two organizations with the goal of further strengthening and enhancing their cooperation through dialogue and consultation.

Furthermore, the text urges that, in view of the special relationship between the United Nations and the OIC, the United Nations provide technical and other forms of assistance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In order for such cooperation to remain forever a dynamic reality, it requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on all efforts undertaken in order for the two organizations to work side by side towards the same goal.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference, which currently comprises 56 member States and four observers, is therefore an active force on the international scene of which the international community must take account. The OIC has proved its maturity and credibility. At its most recent regular ministerial meeting, held last July in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, several resolutions were adopted representing the contributions made by the Islamic Ummah to the establishment of a world of peace and fraternity. That meeting considered objectively the situation in Kosovo, in Afghanistan, in Kashmir and in Somalia, among others. It considered also the issues of globalization, the continuing deterioration in the terms of trade and the debt problem of the developing countries. It took a hard look at the structural distortions and discriminatory treatment that are currently undermining the United Nations system and especially the Security Council, and it advocated solutions and recommended measures with respect to all of these issues. In other words, the OIC has thus demonstrated that it is an instrument in the service of peace, development and solidarity among people. It is therefore in the interests of the United Nations to use such an instrument in the context of its mission to work towards a world of justice and peace.

As the facts speak for themselves, I do not need to explain further. I am firmly convinced that the Assembly will fully support draft resolution A/54/L.12, which I have the honour of submitting to it for consideration and adoption.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Bangladesh is happy to participate in the debate on agenda item 29, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference" today in the plenary General Assembly. We commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his concise and focused report on this agenda item in document A/54/308. We appreciate his efforts in promoting enhanced cooperation between the two organizations.

The United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) have been working in close cooperation in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and technical fields. The two organizations share common objectives in addressing global issues, including international peace, fundamental human rights and economic and social development. My delegation believes that increasing cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC and its organs and institutions contributes to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations and its Charter.

While my delegation welcomes the strengthening of cooperation between the two Organizations, allow me to point out here that we have not yet been able to be successful in harnessing the actual mechanism of such cooperation. The two organizations have actively participated in enhancing the objectives of international peace and security, development and social justice. We have observed with satisfaction that the United Nations, with its funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and the OIC, with its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions, have been working together to complement each other.

The Secretary-General's report contains detailed information on actions to follow up the recommendations of the meetings between the United Nations system and the OIC, including cooperation in the field of economic and social development. From the report, we know that

the United Nations system and concerned OIC institutions worked closely during the past year in different fields through exchanges of information and other activities. My delegation is happy to learn from the report about the level of active cooperation between the OIC and the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Food Programme and other bodies of the United Nations system.

We have noticed that in recent years the international community has prioritized certain areas of cooperation, such as peace-building, peacekeeping, preventive deployment and preventive diplomacy. We the members of the OIC have also been actively contributing in this regard. We are happy to observe that the cooperation between United Nations and the OIC in this field has been on the increase for quite some time. My delegation firmly believes that the cooperation between the two organizations in these fields should continue.

I am happy to announce that my delegation is a sponsor of draft resolution A/54/L.12, under agenda item 29, on the continuation of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I urge States Members of the United Nations to adopt the draft resolution by consensus as a mark of solidarity with the Islamic world.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): It is my privilege to address the General Assembly this morning on agenda item 29, which covers the status of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations has proved to be an important dimension of the international system. Since its establishment, the Organization of the Islamic Conference has acted as an indispensable forum for cooperation and solidarity among its member States. We fully believe that the organization has the potential to play a more influential role in global issues.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference is one of those major regional organizations which can contribute to and benefit from the work of the United Nations. Interaction between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference can address a variety of issues, ranging from peacemaking to cultural development and from the protection of the environment to the fight against terrorism and illicit drug trafficking.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference covers a vast geographical area and a large population dispersed over four continents. It represents a rich diversity of cultures and political systems, taking as a common denominator the heritage of Islam, a name that literally derives from the word "peace". The Organization of the Islamic Conference gains profound historical and political experience through its members, which enables it to be an important instrument of peace and stability in the world.

The report presented by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference indicates a welcome deepening of relations between the two organizations through high-level contacts, regular consultations and technical meetings. My delegation supports this process and calls for its continuation.

The emphasis given in the report to the potential for cooperation in the fields of economic and social development, and particularly in peacemaking efforts, which are a new and a very important dimension, is timely and very important. The prospects of cooperation in all these fields are, indeed, encouraging. The regular consultations between the two organizations, especially on the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, are worth mentioning in this respect. The priority issues on the agenda of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, such as the Middle East, Palestine, Tajikistan, Cyprus, Somalia, Jammu and Kashmir, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nagorny Karabakh and Kosovo, among others, coincide with the issues treated at the United Nations. We believe that joint United Nations and OIC peace initiatives could be useful in some other conflict situations as well.

A general meeting between representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations system and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and coordination meetings of focal points of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to be organized in the year 2000, will certainly help consolidate the grounds for cooperation.

The special meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to be held at Istanbul in the first months of next year will permit an assessment of the activities of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and will also make it possible to formulate some ideas on promoting future cooperation

between the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

My delegation supports the draft resolution introduced by the delegation of Burkina Faso, which calls for the enhancement of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. We hope that such cooperation will further contribute to global efforts for peace and international solidarity.

Mr. Haque (Pakistan): The report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (A/54/308) summarizes the progress achieved over the past year by the United Nations system and the OIC in promoting their shared goals of international peace, security and development. It is a matter of satisfaction to my delegation that the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have continued effective contacts and consultations on a number of current political issues, including Afghanistan, the Middle East and Palestine, Somalia and Tajikistan. Their mutually supportive role and their determination to promote negotiations to resolve those conflicts have received wide international support.

We believe that it would be useful for the two organizations to further expand the ambit of such consultations to include situations where no progress has been registered despite the fact that those situations may have the potential to endanger global peace and security. Jammu and Kashmir is one such issue where cooperation between the two organizations would be useful in promoting a just and equitable solution to the problem in accordance with Security Council resolutions on the subject.

We note with appreciation that cooperation between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference is increasing also in a wide range of socio-economic areas of mutual interest. The report of the Secretary-General includes brief accounts of follow-up action during the past year by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Labour Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Population Fund.

We are of the view that the two sides should continue to examine ways and means of further expanding and diversifying their cooperation by identifying new areas. Enhanced cooperation would benefit the peoples of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the membership of the United Nations.

During the debate on this agenda item last year, we expressed concern over the fact that the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which has been functioning in New York for more than two decades, does not enjoy formal recognition by the host Government. We expressed the hope that a more helpful attitude would be adopted by the host Government. Unfortunately, the OIC mission continues to be denied the privileges and immunities which are essential for its effective functioning. We understand that the Government of Switzerland has extended the necessary privileges to the OIC Observer Mission in Geneva, facilitating its interaction with the United Nations and with the specialized agencies based in that country. Similar facilities should be extended to the OIC in New York. We would therefore once again urge the host Government to ensure that the OIC Mission is accorded the necessary privileges, as envisaged in Article 105 of the United Nations Charter and in the relevant provisions of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement with the host country.

I would like to conclude by expressing our confidence that cooperation between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference will continue to flourish. Pakistan, as a member of both those organizations, will continue to work towards promoting greater cooperation and coordination between the two organizations.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should like to begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of The Islamic Conference (OIC), contained in document A/54/308. The report gives evidence of a most welcome deepening of relations between the two organizations through high-level contacts, regular consultations and technical meetings. The Secretary-General has in fact touched upon a number of areas on which solid ground for cooperation has already been established. This report demonstrates that a lot has been achieved, although much remains to be done.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference has been taking place over many years of sustained interaction in various spheres of regional cooperation. These close links are a real expression of the cooperation and coordination that are required among international organizations. They demonstrate that the world Organization and regional arrangements can come together to promote peace and security around the globe.

There is no doubt that the relationship between the two organizations is becoming more diversified as far as joint cooperation is concerned. Foremost among the issues of concern to the two organizations are matters related to international peace and security, especially those concerning ongoing peacemaking efforts, which constitute a very important dimension of cooperation between the two organizations. In this respect, joint efforts to resolve the continued crisis in Afghanistan and put an end to the agony and suffering of the Afghan people is one of the priorities of the OIC which also figures prominently in the agenda of the United Nations. We hope that both organizations will continue to maintain close contacts and exchange views on this issue and will try to bring pressure to bear on the parties concerned to abandon bloodshed and militaristic policies and to come to the negotiating table.

With regard to peacemaking efforts, mention has to be made of the efforts undertaken by the OIC to help the international efforts to resolve the Kosovo crisis, which culminated in the negotiations conducted by an OIC ministerial delegation, headed by the Iranian Foreign Minister, who visited a number of the capitals in Europe, particularly in the Balkans. Cooperation between the two organizations in this respect led to the participation of the OIC in the framework of OIC/United Nations cooperation in the Group of Friends of the United Nations Secretary-General for Kosovo. We are pleased to note that the report of the Secretary-General is promising in that it shows that there has been a broad agreement on the value of regular political consultations between the two organizations.

The matter of dialogue among civilizations is on the agenda of the United Nations and the OIC. It has already become one of the main subjects of joint activity between the two organizations. The OIC, as a forum composed of more than 50 member States, represents one fifth of the world's population, spread over nearly all continents. It further represents a rich diversity of cultures and political systems. It is therefore in a position to contribute considerably to the promotion and enrichment of dialogue among civilizations.

The OIC began playing an active role in promoting the idea by organizing the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Tehran from 3 to 5 May 1999. The symposium, initiated and sponsored by Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Chairman of the Eighth Summit of the OIC, issued the Tehran Declaration on Dialogue among Civilizations. The OIC's twenty-sixth session of Foreign Ministers, in Ouagadougou, adopted the Tehran Declaration and further decided to set up an open-ended high-level group of governmental experts to draft a universal declaration on dialogue among civilizations, as well as a 10-year plan of action in coordination with the United Nations and other relevant organizations.

Similarly, on the initiative of the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on 9 and 10 November 1998 the OIC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights jointly organized, at the United Nations Office in Geneva, a seminar entitled "Enriching the universality of human rights: Islamic perspectives on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". That seminar, which forms part of a process for providing Islamic perspectives on the Universal Declaration, was a turning point in the history of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC, because it dealt with human rights on the one hand, and because it was unprecedented in the 50-year history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the other. Twenty experts in Islamic law and human rights, selected by the High Commissioner and the OIC, presented their views and perceptions in this seminar. It helped initiate convergence of views and understanding between the two organizations on the important issue of human rights.

Many other activities have been the subject of joint work between the OIC and the United Nations. The Islamic countries have expressed their desire to cooperate with the United Nations on issues of significance such as peacekeeping, confidence-building measures, disarmament, protection and preservation of the environment and combating terrorism and illicit trafficking in drugs, as well as respect for international law in general and the United Nations Charter in particular.

The issues of common interest to the two organizations are by no means confined to what I have attempted to present here. There exist areas of common desire and aim which need to be further developed; to this end, new avenues for better understanding and

strengthened cooperation in various fields should be explored.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the Chair of the Eighth OIC Summit, is pleased with the result of many years of multilateral and regional cooperation. On the eve of the new millennium, the OIC looks forward to continuing joint activities with the hope and expectation that we will be able to undertake on behalf of all citizens of Islamic countries, as well as human beings across the globe, with continued joint activity in areas that are of high priority for all countries. Without doubt, the new situation at the international level requires ever closer cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations. We should promote the launching of new programmes, and the OIC is ready to engage in more meaningful and direct activities with the support of the United Nations.

We are confident that the adoption of draft resolution A/54/L.12, just introduced by the Ambassador of Burkina Faso, will serve as another basis for promoting in the coming year joint activities which fall within the common purposes of both organizations, whose goals are to ensure international cooperation in seeking solutions to international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

I wish to close by reaffirming the pledge of my Government, as the Chairman of the Eighth OIC Summit, to gear our efforts towards the promotion and strengthening of cooperation between the two organizations.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are discussing today the agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference". In this respect, I wish to express our deep appreciation and full support for the report submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/54/308.

Since its inception in 1969, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has been a melting pot for thinking, opinions and consultations, where member States exchange expertise and experience, coordinate their positions and determine common Islamic action to ensure social, economic and cultural progress. It also strives to ensure prosperity and well-being for its peoples, in keeping with the principles of peace and justice provided for in the Charter. Since 1978, when formal cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations began, this cooperation has continued to expand and to encompass new fields. Recent efforts and cooperation by the two organizations focusing on some issues have led to positive results, in particular in the fields of preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlement of conflicts and support for and consolidation of international peace and security.

With its deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and the OIC, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been giving moral and financial support to the OIC. This has enabled that organization to deal with many crises while working to achieve its objectives. At the same time, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has stressed the importance of the OIC as an international force for moderation and peace, in accordance with the tolerant principles of Islam, which support the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The Kingdom also welcomes and commends the desire of the two organizations to continue their close cooperation in political, economic, social and cultural fields and their common endeavour towards maintaining international peace and security.

The OIC has in the past few decades played a constructive role in many different fields. In the political sphere, the OIC has helped contain or defuse many international political conflicts and has worked to promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts. These efforts have had a positive impact on international peace, stability and security. In the economic and social sphere, the OIC has been seeking the establishment and the promotion of large-scale cooperation among its member countries in order to ensure economic and social development and to promote cooperation through multilateral efforts at the international and national levels with a view to establishing a more just international economic order. In the cultural and educational spheres, the OIC has been working to help peoples of the member countries reach the necessary level of education to be able to cope with the developments of our times while upholding the tolerant teachings of Islam. At the same time, the OIC is working vigorously to present a true image of Islam, in the face of efforts by others to link Islam and terrorism, despite the fact that the OIC has condemned all forms of terrorism, including State terrorism.

Although 20 years have elapsed since the OIC United Nations permanent mission began its work, the OIC does not enjoy the same facilities and privileges enjoyed by the United Nations missions of other regional organizations in accordance with the United Nations Headquarters Agreement. We hope that this issue will receive due attention from the authorities responsible for the implementation of the Headquarters Agreement so

that the OIC office can carry out its functions and responsibilities in an integrated manner.

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that my delegation fully supports the draft resolution submitted by Burkina Faso, the chairman-in-office of the OIC's ministerial conference. We hope that the Assembly will adopt this draft resolution by consensus. We also wish the OIC and the United Nations every success in their cooperation in all fields, cooperation aimed at promoting an international community that enjoys peaceful coexistence and security for the prosperity of all peoples throughout the world.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to note that since the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) became a permanent observer at the United Nations in 1975, significant progress has been achieved in the cooperation between the two organizations in the political, economic and social areas, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General on this item. The OIC has participated actively in meetings of the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, and it has also entered into cooperation agreements with various United Nations subsidiary organs. Both organizations have shown a strong commitment to finding appropriate solutions to political and economic issues of common interest and concern. Cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC has proven to be an indispensable aspect of international relations.

The OIC was founded 30 years ago not only to strengthen unity and solidarity among the Islamic Ummah community but also to forge cooperation among its members in all areas. Today the OIC is an important international institution serving peace and security and working for a better future for the Muslim community and humanity as a whole.

The Muslim countries must now launch a concerted effort to play an active role in international affairs and the world economy, as the Ummah cannot be a passive recipient of globalization. What is required is nothing short of a mental revolution in the thinking of Muslim countries so that they can avoid becoming shut out by the pace of globalization. In this regard, cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations is essential in order to ensure that the Muslim community has an equitable share of the world economy and of development.

As a member of the OIC and the Security Council, my delegation welcomes the various joint initiatives and missions that have been undertaken by the two organizations in Afghanistan in order to defuse tension and facilitate peaceful settlements of disputes there. As regards Tajikistan, the OIC continues to be a member of the Contact Group that was established as part of the implementation phase of the Tajik peace process. Somalia continues to be a major common concern for both the OIC and the United Nations. It is important for the international community to remain engaged with the problem of Somalia and not allow it to continue to fester indefinitely. The efforts made by both organizations in the Lockerbie case led to the suspension of the sanctions in Libya. We regret that this did not result in the final lifting of the sanctions, which we hope will be possible in the near future.

My delegation concurs with the views expressed by the OIC on the need to resolve expeditiously the current crisis between Iraq and the United Nations so as to alleviate and end the plight of the long-suffering Iraqi people. My delegation shares the concern of the OIC over the fact that the indicted war criminals in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to remain out of reach of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. We reiterate our call for more robust efforts to deal with these indicted war criminals, who are still at large. We have to aim for consistency in our commitment and action in this regard. Inasmuch as we are making serious efforts to bring a terrorist to justice, through the passage recently of a Security Council resolution, we should not be seen to be less than serious in our determination in respect to apprehending war criminals who have been indicted for war crimes against humanity.

Both organizations have cooperated well at the political level in the peacemaking efforts in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Somalia, as well as in the peace process in the Middle East and in promoting human rights. Other areas of cooperation include the development of science and technology, trade and development, technical cooperation among Islamic countries, assistance to refugees, food security and agriculture, education and eradication of illiteracy, an investment mechanism and joint ventures, human-resources development, the environment, the development of arts and crafts and the promotion of heritage.

Nevertheless, even though the cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations has always been close, the majority of the OIC countries have not fully benefited from the fruits of this cooperation. Many of them still remain poor and underdeveloped. My delegation believes that it is time for the two organizations to take stock of

the achievements and failures in order to map out new strategies for future cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC. The cooperation at the Secretariat level of the two organizations should be reviewed to make it more effective in responding to the challenges ahead. The new cooperation should be economic in focus and geared towards encouraging enhanced trade and investment flows among the OIC countries and in working towards early reform of the international financial architecture for the benefit of the whole international community.

Malaysia has always played an active role in the OIC. We will continue to play a positive and constructive role in fostering better understanding, solidarity, cooperation and advancement of member countries. Towards this end, Malaysia will be hosting the twenty-seventh session of OIC foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur in June 2000 and we look forward to the United Nations presence there.

My delegation is pleased to support the draft resolution on cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations that was submitted by Ambassador Kafando, the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group.

My delegation firmly believes that the United Nations is well placed to bridge the gap between the Islamic countries and the rest of the international community through dialogue and cooperation. The Secretary-General has acknowledged the positive role played by the OIC and has long considered the OIC to be a vital partner of the United Nations throughout the Islamic world and beyond.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the quality of his report and for the thoughtfulness and work he put into it.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has more than 50 member States, representing one fifth of the world's population throughout all the continents. This almost universal representation confers upon the OIC duties and obligations on a world scale. Thus, it is only natural that it should share the goals and principles, as well as the concerns, of the United Nations. Hence, the importance which the States members of the OIC that are also Members of the United Nations attach to cooperation between these two organizations within the framework of a mutually beneficial partnership.

The political will to establish, strengthen and expand that cooperation has allowed the creation of appropriate consultation machinery for combining the efforts of the two organizations in the search for solutions to the crises facing the Islamic Ummah. Among these crises, the question of Palestine, which was central to the creation of the OIC, occupies a special place. My country, Senegal, which holds the chairmanship of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, can testify to the vitality of relations between the United Nations and the OIC on this question.

In the political realm, this cooperation extends to other conflict areas, including Afghanistan, Somalia, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, more recently, Kosovo. Such conflicts are potential threats to peace and security in the regions concerned and have always afforded opportunities to the two institutions to work in close cooperation by working together to explore and implement ways and means of reducing tensions in those parts of the world. Thus, in the Balkan crisis, the OIC countries worked side by side with the United Nations to provide massive humanitarian assistance to refugees and in the difficult task of building peace in and reconstructing Kosovo.

Preventive diplomacy and the restoration and maintenance of peace are not the sole areas of cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations. This cooperation has increased significantly in recent years to embrace such vast and important areas as economic and social development, environment and refugees — in a word, practically every area of activity of the institutions, programmes and funds of the United Nations system.

It is in this framework that the two organizations continue to coordinate their activities in the context of the 10 priority areas defined by the general meeting of the representatives of the two secretariats and of the organs and agencies of the United Nations and the OIC, held in Geneva in July 1998. These priorities include trade, human resources development, the protection of the environment and the elimination of illiteracy and could even serve as models for the expansion of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC into other areas.

In this respect, I should like to stress — and take pleasure in doing so — the perfect agreement between the two organizations with regard to the dialogue among civilizations, an idea that was put forward at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly by President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran, current Chairman of the OIC. Subsequently, the General Assembly adopted a resolution designating the year 2001

the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. I am convinced that the two organizations will work closely together in the year 2000 to raise that grand initiative to its full significance.

The contemporary world is experiencing an era of serious and varied challenges that must be met with the determination and common will of the international community as a whole. Cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC is, indeed, one appropriate response to all these challenges. For all these reasons, my delegation supports the consensus adoption of the draft resolution before us in document A/54/L.12, introduced so eloquently by the representative of Burkina Faso, speaking on behalf of the OIC.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): I wish to begin by commending Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the current Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of Iran, for their commitment to the cooperation between the two organizations and their work to extend it to new fields of common interest. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The United Nations has, since the beginning, been one of the cornerstones of Norwegian foreign policy. As the problems the international community confronts become more complex, the importance of multilateral negotiations and agreements has increased. So has the role of regional organizations. Norway believes that these organizations constitute important tools for promoting the principles of the United Nations. We consider the Organization of the Islamic Conference a vital partner for the United Nations because of its broad regional influence. We also recognize that the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC reaches far beyond the Islamic world.

Norway fully supports the cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations in their common search for solutions to global problems related to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, decolonization, fundamental human rights and economic, social and technical development. We welcome the increasing efforts being made by the United Nations and the OIC to promote international peace and security. Noting the positive development in the Maghreb, we encourage the two organizations to continue strengthening cooperation in the fields of peacemaking and preventive diplomacy. The periodic high-level meetings between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairman of the OIC and the regular contact at the level of the Department of Political Affairs and the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC to the United Nations are important in this regard.

We particularly request the United Nations and the OIC to renew their efforts to find a negotiated solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. The OIC is playing a crucial role in this transnational conflict involving a number of Islamic countries. The missions to Afghanistan undertaken jointly by the United Nations and the OIC are commendable initiatives. Likewise, coordinated peacemaking efforts in connection with the conflict in Tajikistan constitute an important contribution to the work for peace and stability in the region.

Norway also encourages cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations in countries such as Somalia and in the Balkans.

Cooperation between specialized agencies of the United Nations and the OIC and its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions serves to extend dialogue to new areas. We are pleased to note that information exchange and cooperation are taking place between the OIC and United Nations agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank with a view to enhancing social and economic development.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the United Nations Population Fund and the OIC on 2 October 1998 constituted an important follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. We welcome the steps taken towards further implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action, especially with regard to Islam and reproductive health, Islam and the status of women and Islam and population and development.

Norway notes with appreciation that agencies of the United Nations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are working together in areas of common interest. We are also aware that there is cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the OIC, although this cooperation is not mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. We encourage the dialogue in the human rights field.

The Islamic Commentaries on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are a valuable contribution to a mutual understanding of our joint commitment. Let me also take this opportunity not just to stress the importance of freedom of religion and belief, but also to highlight the role that religious communities can play — including at the non-governmental level — in seeking solutions to conflict. The Oslo Coalition, established in accordance with the mandate of the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, is working with religious and confessional groups to pursue this agenda.

Let me call attention to two further issues: women's rights and the right to education. As Norway stated at the Cairo Conference, women's education is the single most important path to higher productivity and lower infant mortality. We are pleased to note that the education of girls and women is now included in the cooperation programmes between a large number of United Nations and OIC institutions and agencies.

In closing, Norway will again express its appreciation for the commitment of the United Nations and the OIC to develop the cooperation between the two organizations. We hope that this working relationship will be developed further in the years to come.

Mr. Chaouachi (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is considering today the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a matter that has been considered by the Assembly periodically and on which resolutions are adopted annually for the promotion of such cooperation.

Cooperation between these two organizations means coordination and consultation on all international issues, particularly those that are of interest to today's Islamic world, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter that call for promoting cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. This kind of cooperation is very important as it contributes effectively to the consolidation of the objectives and practices of the Charter in all fields.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference is an example of the kind of cooperation that could be established between an international organization and a regional organization, as is evident in the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/54/308) on this question, for which we would like to thank him. During the past year, this cooperation has encompassed several areas, including political, social and humanitarian ones. The two organizations coordinate and hold consultations with each other on a regular basis with a view to finding solutions to issues related to international peace and security, to ending many crises and conflicts and to promoting cooperation and partnership in the economic, social and technical development fields.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC has extended to peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy. The two organizations have consulted with each other on seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. We are pleased with this cooperation and urge that further cooperation of this kind prevail in seeking desired peaceful solutions. We also support all other forms of coordination and consultation efforts between these two organizations in all spheres of common interest, including the Kosovo crisis.

I wish to pay tribute to the cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC in all spheres of economic, social and cultural activity. This cooperation has proved how important it is and has been extended to areas of trade, technical cooperation, food security, agriculture, human resources development and assistance to refugees, among other areas. In this connection, we call for greater technical assistance and other forms of support to be given by the United Nations to the OIC and its associate institutions, in order to continue such cooperation. Therefore, we support the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly on this item, contained in document A/54/L.12.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt)(*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Egyptian delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and for the important information contained in the report. Egypt attaches considerable importance to promoting cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Egypt welcomes the first follow-up meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations, which was held in December 1998 in the context of the follow-up work to the high-level meeting with regional organizations held at United Nations Headquarters in July of the same year. We also welcome the participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in both meetings. The first United Nations follow-up meeting

with regional organizations focused on conflict prevention, marking an important step towards stepped-up implementation of Chapter VIII of the Charter, which clearly delineates the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly in the field of international peace and security.

Egypt is particularly pleased with the follow-up to consultations between the United Nations and the OIC on political questions, particularly those related to the maintenance of international peace and re-establishment of peace, by way of meetings between the two secretaries-general of the two organizations or through regular consultations between high officials on political issues. Such consultations are an important tool for conveying the concerns of member States of the OIC, whose membership is almost one third of the United Nations membership, about issues of common interest for the two organizations, so as to make a real contribution to international efforts designed to find just, comprehensive and balanced answers to these concerns.

We would like to give some examples, though this is not an exhaustive list. We have the questions of Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan and many others related to international peace and security, areas which need concerted efforts on the part of the international community in order to find just political solutions for them.

Conflict prevention was at the heart of the first follow-up meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations. Maintenance of international peace and security is a principal dimension of this question. Economic and social development is another dimension growing in importance at the international level. Therefore, Egypt welcomes the cooperation between the United Nations institutions and agencies that deal with such questions and the relevant institutions of the OIC, which can be seen from the report of the Secretary-General. We hope that this form of cooperation will be reflected in an increased number of specific concrete projects in which entities from both organizations will participate. We also hope that such cooperation will extend to other areas, such as the transfer of technologies to States of the Islamic world and the enhancement of their national capabilities in this vital field, as well as the facilitation of cooperation between those countries, especially as we approach the eve of a new century. We hope that all this can be done with support and cooperation by United Nations institutions and agencies for the OIC special commission on this issue.

Among the main areas of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC, to which our delegation attaches special importance, is cooperation in the cultural field. The importance of such cooperation is increasing in a world where we currently see repetitions of certain doctrines such as clashes of civilizations. Such doctrines ignore the positive historical interaction between different civilizations, as well as the cumulative contributions by various civilizations to the development of the history of humankind. This clearly includes Islamic civilization and its cultural, scientific and humanistic contributions that certainly cannot be denied.

Egypt welcomes the existing cooperation between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Islamic Conference in the spheres of education, science and culture and hopes that it will be further strengthened in the form of more international seminars held jointly so that the world may be acquainted with the contributions of Islamic civilization to the history of humankind.

As regards aspects of cooperation between various United Nations organs and bodies and the OIC, I pay tribute to the cooperation of these two organizations in the humanitarian field through coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the OIC, and also through the support given by the OIC and its States to the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees.

The Egyptian delegation looks forward to the general meeting of the representatives of the two secretariats of the United Nations system and of the OIC next year as an opportunity for a comprehensive review of development and promotion of the cooperation between the two organizations on the eve of the twenty-first century. In this context, my delegation would like to appeal to the host country, the United States of America, to consider positively the question of dealing with the two permanent observer missions of the OIC and the League of Arab States in New York, that they be treated on an equal footing with the other missions with observer status. As such, these two missions will be able to shoulder their responsibilities in the area of promotion of cooperation between the United Nations and the various regional organizations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call on the Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Lamani (Organization of the Islamic Conference) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and on my own behalf, I should like to extend our sincere congratulations to Mr. Gurirab on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We are confident that his wide experience and diplomatic skills are the best guarantee that the work of the Assembly will be conducted effectively and decisively.

I should also like to express our profound appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his remarkable success in steering the work of the fifty-third session.

As we consider agenda item 29, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference", I am honoured to review some of the developments that have taken place in the political, economic, social and humanitarian fields during the period under review.

The United Nations and the OIC share a commitment to intensify cooperation and coordination between them and to seek solutions to issues of common concern, such as peace, security, disarmament, self-determination, basic human rights, economic and social development and technical cooperation.

The report of the Secretary-General now before the Assembly, contained in document A/54/308, highlights this cooperation. In this regard, I should like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his wise leadership of the international Organization and his effective role in the realization of its goals.

I should also like to express our appreciation to the executive heads of the various United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies for their laudable efforts to enhance cooperation between the two organizations for the effective implementation of joint programmes.

In affirmation of the growing needs and common requirements of the member States of the OIC, General Assembly resolution 53/16 of 29 October 1998 called for the strengthening of cooperation between our two organizations in the political, social, economic and humanitarian fields, a detailed review of which is contained in the Secretary-General's report.

These issues were also reviewed at the annual meeting of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the OIC, which was held at United Nations Headquarters on 1 October 1999. Moreover, consultations continued between the Secretaries-General of the two organizations with regard to other important and urgent issues of common concern, including the question of Palestine, the situation in the Middle East, Somalia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and other matters.

We look forward to the general meeting between representatives of the Secretariat of the United Nations system and the OIC, as well as the coordination meetings between the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the OIC and its subsidiary organs and other specialized institutions, which are scheduled to take place in 2000 in Geneva. In those meetings, cooperation and joint activities will be reviewed, and future plans and proposals to enhance and strengthen the mechanisms for cooperation between the two organizations will be discussed.

I should also like to reiterate the concern and interest of the OIC in the matter of the reform of the United Nations and of the Security Council, since the OIC member States have a direct and vital stake in determining the outcome of these reforms. This was affirmed by the most recent annual coordinating meeting of the Foreign Ministers of member States of the OIC, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 1 October 1999.

Turning from the political sphere to the fields of economic and social development, I should like to refer to the report of the Secretary-General, which illustrates the continued progress in the areas of technology, trade, development and technical cooperation among the member States of the OIC, as well as in assistance to refugees, food security, agriculture, education, fighting illiteracy, investment mechanisms, development of human resources and the environment.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that a memorandum of understanding between the OIC and the United Nations Population Fund was signed in 1998 to enhance cooperation in the fields of family and

social education, population census, reproductive health and related questions.

This month, another memorandum of understanding between the OIC and the World Food Programme will be signed to promote cooperation and coordination of activities in areas of common interest.

We are currently conducting negotiations with the United Nations in order to find ways of establishing close cooperation in the area of protecting children during armed conflicts.

The Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso, in his capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group, has just introduced a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC, which is before the Assembly in document A/54/L.12 of 21 October 1999. I should like to draw attention to two important paragraphs in the operative part.

Paragraph 3 requests the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to continue to cooperate in their common search for solutions to global problems, such as questions relating to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, decolonization, fundamental human rights, social and economic development and technical cooperation. Undoubtedly, this paragraph reaffirms the will of the United Nations to involve the OIC in diplomatic and mediation efforts to find solutions to problems of common concern.

Secondly, paragraph 11 urges the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, especially the lead agencies, to provide increased technical and other forms of assistance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions in order to enhance cooperation. We would welcome such support, as it would strengthen and enhance the capacity of our organization and make its contribution to the joint programmes and activities of the United Nations more effective.

Allow me once more to raise an issue that I had raised in the Assembly during its fifty-third session. However, it is my hope that raising it again might enable us to achieve the desired objective. The issue concerns the facilities and privileges granted to Missions to the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement. It is well known that, unlike some other regional organizations, the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC does not fully enjoy these facilities and privileges. As we raise this issue once again, we hope that those responsible for the implementation of the Headquarters Agreement will give it serious consideration and the importance it deserves so that we can discharge our tasks and responsibilities fully and more effectively.

I hope the draft resolution before the Assembly will be adopted by consensus.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the ongoing interest of the OIC in the continuation of cooperation and coordination with the United Nations and its full commitment to the provisions of the Charter and to the realization of its noble purposes.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.12.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.12?

Draft resolution A/54/L.12 was adopted (resolution 54/7).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 32

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/420)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.13)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Peru to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.13.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As in previous years, the delegation of Peru would like to introduce a draft resolution under agenda item 32 on the basis of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/3 — referred to in the Secretary-General's report of 23 September 1998 (A/53/420) — entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System". This draft resolution has been circulated as document A/54/L.13.

As will be recalled, ever since this item was introduced into the agenda of the General Assembly in 1987, its consideration has made it possible for Member States of the Latin America and the Caribbean to give adequate articulation to their national priorities through the Latin American Economic System (SELA). This articulation has greater relevance in the present context of globalization, a phenomenon in which the various national actors of each of our countries need a fruitful exchange of their experiences in their gradual inclusion.

In this connection, it falls on SELA — a body that has existed for over 27 years — to bring about greater cooperation in support of economic and social development in the region through a mechanism that is flexible and provides for periodic consultations. In 1996, the Latin American Council, the ministerial organ of SELA, adopted a dynamic programme of modernization and restructuring of the organization that consisted mainly of reorienting its programme of work and updating its functioning. This smooth exchange of experiences has been possible thanks to the participation of specialized agencies, United Nations programmes and other organizations.

In 1996, 1997 and early in 1998, SELA developed programmes for technical cooperation between developing countries in the fields of decentralization and support to small and medium-sized businesses.

Peru hopes that, as in earlier years, this draft resolution will once again have the consensus support of the Member States of the United Nations, thereby reflecting the spirit of contribution to the efforts that each region is promoting in seeking to achieve that development is also a participatory and comprehensive process.

Mr. Kerpens (Suriname): I have the honour to address the Assembly in this debate on agenda item 32 on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Allow me at the outset to express the appreciation of CARICOM to the representative of Peru for introducing draft resolution A/54/L.13, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System" I would like to commend it for unanimous adoption by the General Assembly.

Likewise, CARICOM member States take pride in thanking the Secretary-General for his informative report contained in document A/53/420, outlining the various activities in the area of cooperation between the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and the United Nations system, in particular with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Those activities can be characterized as considerable and diversified.

Our present era is characterized by an increased globalization of markets. The ensuing concentration of power and influence lies in the hands of those nations, institutions and individuals that can master the wealth of information on all aspects of human interaction, be it economic, financial, political, social or cultural. It harbours, at the same time, the danger of marginalizing those that cannot adapt successfully to these changes.

Regional institutions like SELA can play an indispensable role in assisting countries, in particular small and vulnerable ones such as CARICOM member States, to make the adaptation process less costly, less painful and speedy by analysing trends of the ongoing globalization process, recommending policy options and promoting efforts towards further integration among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, between the subregions in our hemisphere and between our region and other regions. Through these activities, SELA has contributed to the integration of its member States into the global economy and to the growing, mutually beneficial, interdependent relations that exist between the different subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The member States of CARICOM were therefore very saddened by the tragic event that took place in February 1998, which resulted in the destruction of the premises of the Permanent Secretariat in Caracas. This has been a setback in our institutional capacity to deal with the twin processes of adaptation to fundamental changes at the global level and our efforts to strengthen the process of integration, both within our region and between our region and other regions.

This tragic event has forced the member States to focus their attention not only on restoring the valuable assets of the organization, but also on addressing its institutional vulnerability and inefficiency and on defining ways to improve the difficult financial situation of SELA. Through the decisions adopted at the seventh and eighth special Council meetings and at the twenty-fourth ordinary Council meeting, they have initiated a process

of restructuring and modernization that should eventually equip SELA with the tools to continue to respond in a positive manner to the demands of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Following these changes, SELA will concentrate its future activities on three thematic areas: extra-regional relations, intra-regional relations and regional cooperation. Its work programme, its budget and its human resources management will undergo the necessary changes and adaptations in order to be in a position to fulfil its mandate according to these strategic thematic areas. Enhanced cooperation between SELA and the United Nations in these areas will be beneficial to the United Nations system and to all countries belonging to the Latin American and Caribbean family.

To place the financial situation of the organization on a sound basis, the member States of SELA have adopted the Payment Incentive Programme in order to make available the necessary means for the implementation of its work programme. CARICOM member States pledge their support for these important initiatives and appeal to donor countries and the United Nations system, in particular to the United Nations Development Programme, to continue to contribute to the funding of the work programme and, where possible, to increase their valuable contributions.

The Latin American and Caribbean Economic System remains for CARICOM a valuable instrument in providing information on how to deal with one of the most crucial issues related to development, namely, how to finance development. It is therefore commendable that the twenty-fifth Council meeting, which will be held from 26 to 28 October 1999, has chosen as its central theme "Options for Latin America and the Caribbean vis-à-vis the international financial crisis". That crisis has been a source of concern for CARICOM countries, considering that they too are confronted with obstacles in attracting financial resources for their development.

Based on its experience in this matter, SELA could play a role in helping to define the way the United Nations should deal with the pending issues related to the convening of an international conference on money and finance, which will be discussed later, when the Second Committee resumes the debate on these issues during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

As we witness the closing of the century and the dawning of a new millennium, much attention is rightfully focused on our truly universal Organization, the United Nations, to guide us on the path where we will confront the challenges facing humanity.

How to define human security and how to achieve the goals derived from our concept of what dignifies humanity will probably depend on the extent to which we will be able to make the United Nations an effective instrument to assist us in this endeavour.

In our region, we must take a closer look at regional organizations in order to be able to contribute from our own regional perspective to the achievement of these objectives. Cooperation and mutual assistance between SELA and the United Nations will not only be logical but will undoubtedly make our task a little easier.

CARICOM therefore envisions greater cooperation between SELA and the United Nations as a way to combine the efforts of the region with those of the international system to achieve greater cooperation and coherence in our common struggle for the good of the peoples we represent, and we look forward to a deepening of the existing relations between our two institutions.

In conclusion, the CARICOM member States reiterate their support for the Latin American Economic System, but likewise they are looking forward to concerted actions by that institution to assist them in their efforts to integrate effectively into the global economy.

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela, as a country that has the privilege of serving as headquarters for the Latin American Economic System (SELA), would like to reiterate its appreciation for the efforts made by the United Nations, through the specialized agencies of the system, to strengthen the cooperation and coordination of the Latin American Economic System in areas of priority interest for the development of our region.

This cooperation is becoming increasingly important at a time when the world Organization and the regional and subregional organizations are beginning to deal with the phenomenon of globalization and are assessing its impact on economic and social development. As pointed out by the delegation of Suriname, in the next few days, on Tuesday and Wednesday, we will be holding in Caracas the twenty-fifth regular meeting of the Latin American Council of SELA, whose main topic will be the options of Latin America and the Caribbean vis-à-vis the international financial crisis. The Permanent

Secretariat has had the support of United Nations bodies in preparing for the debate on this issue.

In the framework of that cooperation with the United Nations, we are pleased to note, *inter alia*, the continuation of the Agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and SELA on "Communication for the Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean"; the participation of SELA in the fourteenth regional meeting of the International Labour Organization; and the contribution made by Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level regional meeting entitled "Towards a stable and predictable international financial system and its relationship to social development", convened by the Government of Mexico and in which SELA also participated. Venezuela deems it important that these efforts continue and multiply so that they may contribute to the economic and social development of the region.

With regard to the United Nations system, it is particularly important for the member States of SELA to ensure that the United Nations Development Programme continues to provide financial and technical support to programmes carried out by the Permanent Secretariat with a view to complementing the cooperation and technical-assistance activities of SELA in the region.

Venezuela is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.13, which is before the Assembly and was introduced by the delegation of Peru, and we trust that it will be adopted by consensus in this Hall.

The Acting President: I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/54/L.13: Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti and Nicaragua.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.13.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.13?

Draft resolution A/54/L.13 was adopted (resolution 54/8).

The Acting President: I shall now call on the representative of Finland, who wishes to make a statement in explanation of vote.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Silvennoinen (Finland): I have the honour to take the floor in order to explain the position of the European Union (EU). The EU joined the consensus on draft resolution A/54/L.13 on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System, but at the same time would like to put on record the following observations.

Regarding operative paragraphs 3 and 4, we note that the resolution urges the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the specialized agencies and other organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to renew their contribution and to intensify their support for, and cooperation with, the Latin American Economic System. It is the understanding of the European Union that decisions and agreements on such activities should be made by the Executive Board of UNDP and in the governing bodies of the respective specialized agencies, other organizations, funds and programmes, in accordance with their respective agreed priorities and budget.

We support the request expressed in operative paragraph 5 that a review should be done at an appropriate time to assess the implementation of the agreement between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System, also with a view to evaluating its expediency.

The European Union would like to place on record its concern that for the second successive time, Member States have not been afforded sufficient opportunity to informally consult one another on this resolution, and it requests that, in the interests of transparency and the smooth running of the General Assembly, Member States be given such an opportunity in the future by the early distribution of drafts in advance of their consideration at the plenary.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.39

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

39th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Morel (Seychelles), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 13

Report of the International Court of Justice (A/54/4)

The Acting President: The report of the International Court of Justice contained in document A/54/4 covers the period 1 August 1998 to 31 July 1999. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the International Court of Justice?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I call on Mr. Stephen Schwebel, President of the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Schwebel (President of the International Court of Justice): I am pleased to see the Vice-President of the Court and other colleagues of mine present in the Assembly.

It is an honour to speak to the General Assembly under the presidency of the Foreign Minister of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. The work of the International Court of Justice has been intertwined with the destiny of Namibia, in which he has played so prominent a part.

It has been said that where one stands depends on where one sits. The judges of the International Court of Justice sit in the favoured city of The Hague as members of the world's most senior international court, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, the Court with the richest history, the broadest material jurisdiction, the most refined jurisdictional jurisprudence; they sit in a World Court which since 1922 has issued scores of judgments that have successfully settled international disputes and contributed to the shaping and reshaping of international law.

From the judicial perspective of The Hague, the century that is about to close is a century of great achievement and profound loss, of extraordinary scientific and technological advance and of atavistic reversion to barbarism. With the horrors of two world wars and too many other wars; the organized bestialities of the Holocaust, whose obsessive scale gave rise to the General Assembly's interdiction of the crime of genocide; the purposeful and pervasive atrocities of Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and Sierra Leone, among others, some even more recent or continuing — this century is as marked by its invention of the concentration camp and the refugee camp as it is by its invention of the airplane and of the exploration of space. Man's knowledge has improved exponentially but his character has not; human nature seems less promising than it may have been thought to be in 1899. Certainly the need to regulate human — and inhuman — behaviour looks no less pressing today than it did in 1899, when the first Hague Peace Conference took up the now familiar

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subjects of the peaceful settlement of international disputes, disarmament and the law of war. The twentieth century has witnessed appalling acts of aggression and regression, yet it has seen unparalleled advances in international law and institutions as well.

It is remarkable to recall that the first worldwide diplomatic conferences in the history of mankind were as recent as the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907. There had been earlier multilateral conferences to end wars and share out spheres of influence. But the Hague Conferences were the first beginnings of international diplomacy that gave rise to the formation of international organization and the concerted promotion of international law. It is fitting that the Hague Conference of 1899 was searchingly commemorated this year in The Hague and that it was addressed with his characteristic insight by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

As early as 1907, at the second Hague Peace Conference, the creation of a permanent court of international justice was proposed. That proposal was not adopted, notably because agreement could not be reached on how to choose the judges. Such concerns were submerged by the outbreak of the First World War and the extraordinary extent of the death and destruction that its prolongation entailed.

But the catastrophe of the First World War led to the great experiment of the League of Nations, the construction of an institutional framework of legal principle and process designed to maintain and promote international peace and security. The League of Nations Covenant provided for the establishment of the Permanent Court of International Justice, and its organs provided the means for electing its members. That Court, the immediate predecessor of the International Court of Justice, was set up in 1922 and functioned until 1940. It functioned well. It demonstrated that a world court could work and that international law could be made more effective through judicial determination. The Court successfully adjudicated disputes between States, and its judgments and advisory opinions made major contributions to the development of international law. It opened the gateway to the creation of a modern law of human rights by holding that treaties may establish rights and obligations for individuals which are enforceable under international law.

The League of Nations, for reasons beyond its control, was unable to contain the assault of the Axis Powers on peace and civilization — nor, of course, could the Court. With the defeat of the Axis Powers, the will to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" led to the creation of the United Nations, a sharply reformed League. But the Court, unlike the League, was not sharply reformed. It was maintained almost intact because statesmen and scholars alike saw it as a success within its own sphere.

The few innovations introduced into the Statute at San Francisco were positive. The new Court became the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, and all United Nations Members became party to the Court's Statute, which forms an integral part of the Charter.

No international court in an international society as decentralized as international society was and is could prevent war. As has been rightly observed, more often than not it is not disputes as to rights which cause wars, but rather conflicts of interests, which is quite a different matter. Yet a world court can fundamentally foster peace through the adjudicated settlement of international disputes and the development of the body of international law.

Today, 53 years after its creation, the International Court of Justice has more than justified that perception. As the annual report of the Court transmitted to the General Assembly recounts, in the period from 1 August 1998 to 31 July 1999 the Court rendered two judgments and one advisory opinion. It issued orders on requests for provisional measures in another 11 cases. It admitted counter-claims in another case, and it issued orders concerning the conduct of proceedings in 19 cases in all. Those cases concern international disputes both large and small. The issues raised are diverse and significant. The parties are as diverse as the issues.

What is especially arresting is that during this period the Court was seized of 18 new contentious cases, far more than have ever been filed within any 12-month period before. Ten of those cases, brought by Yugoslavia against 10 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in respect of the Kosovo bombing, have marked commonalities. But even so, the extent of increased recourse to the Court is remarkable, and it is continuing. Pakistan filed an application against India last month in respect of the shooting down of a Pakistani naval aircraft. Chile has informed the Court of, and publicly announced, an intention to bring to the Court the Pinochet case against Spain.

This extended recourse is all the more noteworthy when the diversity of States submitting cases to the Court

is considered. Parties to the statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice were restricted by the prevalence of colonial rule and the policies of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Perforce, the Permanent Court of International Justice was Euro-centred. The International Court of Justice today is universal in its clientele. States submitting cases to the Court are drawn not only from Europe and the Americas, but from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Australasia. Indeed, today States of Africa are in the lead in their resort to the Court. The Court itself is universal in its composition, made up as it is of members from the United States of America, Sri Lanka, Japan, Algeria, France, Madagascar, Hungary, China, Germany, Sierra Leone, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, the Netherlands and Brazil.

The extent of recourse to the Court is immensely encouraging. It is to be hoped that this will in turn promote wider adherence to the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. Before the end of the cold war, the jurisdiction of the Court was a perennial subject of jousting in the Sixth Committee between East and West. A regular feature of codification conferences called by the United Nations was battles over whether the Court should be endowed with the jurisdiction to adjudicate disputes that might arise under the treaties concluded by those conferences. In view of the positive evolution of international relations, those battles should be a thing of the past. There is no reason why the jurisdiction of the Court should not be regularly provided for.

It is to be equally hoped that the number of States adhering to the jurisdiction of the Court under the optional clause will grow at a greater rate. Sixty-two States currently adhere, only a third of the number of parties to the Statute and a number that does not include many of the larger States. A higher proportion of States adhered to the optional clause of the Statute of the Permanent Court in 1939 than is the comparable case today.

Not only is the Court far busier than ever before, not only is the diversity of States using the Court far greater, but the range of issues raised before the Court increasingly includes questions related to major international crises. In the 12 months under review, cases concerning hostilities in Kosovo and the Congo were brought to the Court, joining on the docket such sensitive cases as those concerning the Lockerbie atrocity and claims of genocide on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The Court's General List also includes four cases of boundary delimitation, a more traditional area in which the Court has been notably successful. A few of those boundary cases are of very great importance to the States concerned. The boundary dispute on which the Court will announce a judgment in some weeks concerns the river boundary between Botswana and Namibia and a small island in the boundary river. But the example set by Botswana and Namibia — of litigating rather than fighting over a bit of land — is one that other States, including other African States, could usefully emulate.

In the past year, resort to requests for the indication of provisional measures stands out. Such requests take precedence over all other judicial business. They may strain the members of the Court and its Registry. In the *LaGrand* case, brought by Germany against the United States, the Court agreed unanimously on an indication of provisional measures within 24 hours of receipt of the application. In the 10 applications filed by Yugoslavia against members of NATO, the Court acted rapidly.

When provisional measures are sought, the Court deals with them while other cases are in progress. That illustrates a broader trend in the Court — to deal with more than one case at a time, rather than taking up cases successively, a trend which, however, is constrained by the extent of the Court's resources. The Registry, and the budget of the Court, essentially were designed for an era when the Court had few, not many, cases on its docket.

The entry of actors onto the international stage other than States which also influence the processes of international law-making and administration has, among other factors, fostered the creation of specialized international tribunals. This development is to be welcomed. It makes international law more effective by endowing legal obligations with the means of their determination and enforcement. Concern that the proliferation of international tribunals might produce substantial conflict among them, and evisceration of the docket of the International Court of Justice, have not materialized, at any rate as yet. A greater range of international legal forums is likely to mean that more disputes are submitted to international judicial settlement. The more international adjudication there is, the more there is likely to be; the "judicial habit" may stimulate healthy imitation.

At the same time, in order to minimize such possibility as may occur of significant conflicting interpretations of international law, there might be virtue

in enabling other international tribunals to request advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice on issues of international law that arise in cases before those tribunals that are of importance to the unity of international law.

In respect of international tribunals that are organs of the United Nations, such as the international tribunals for the prosecution of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, no jurisdictional problem in their requesting the Security Council to request advisory opinions on their behalf appears, should they wish to do so. The Council is authorized by the Charter to request the Court to give an advisory opinion on any legal question, and nothing in the Statutes of the war crimes tribunals debars them from asking the Security Council to exercise that authority on their behalf. Nor do the administrative tribunals of the United Nations system lack the competence to request the General Assembly or comparable organs of the specialized agencies to request opinions on their behalf.

There is even room for the argument that international tribunals that are not United Nations organs, such as the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, or the International Criminal Court, when established, might, if they so decide, request the General Assembly — perhaps through the medium of a special committee established for the purpose — to request advisory opinions of the Court. It should be recalled that the League of Nations Council asked advisory opinions not only on behalf of the League, but, more often, of other international agencies and States. The League Covenant did not expressly authorize the Council or the Assembly of the League to request advisory opinions on behalf of others. Nor did the constitutions of such others expressly authorize them to ask the League to request advisory opinions. Do the General Assembly and Security Council lack comparable capacity to serve as channels for requests of international tribunals?

In any event, a certain caution in the creation of new universal courts may be merited in respect of inter-State disputes. The International Court of Justice has demonstrated a capacity to deal with specialized and new, as well as broader and more traditional, problems.

At the same time, the Court will have to respond to the new challenge of cases coming in more rapidly than judgments are going out. Building on its recent review of its work methods, it has now embarked on a revision of its rules and practice, with a view to accelerating its own processes and inducing States parties to join in so doing. The drawing out of Court proceedings by States, by using the maximum number of written and oral exchanges and by requiring excessive lengths of time for the preparation of pleadings, slows the Court's work, as does resort to preliminary objections, which is at times well founded but at other times is apparently tactical. A tendency towards attaching unduly extensive annexes to pleadings requires curbing, because all annexes must be translated, as must be the pleadings themselves — processes which are time-consuming and expensive. The permanent translation staff of the Court is tiny.

Under the chairmanship of Ambassador Mselle, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), whose current report on the Court's administration and budget is most positive and appreciated — as was its report of 1998 on the Court's conditions of service — has accepted the modest expansion in translation staff requested by the Court for the next biennium. The Court trusts that the Fifth Committee will authorize this, as it authorized last year's improvement in conditions of service. But if the Court is to have the capacity and flexibility to translate pleadings in ways which enable it to get more cases ready for hearing more rapidly, larger translation resources will be required. Furthermore, if the members of the Court are to be expected to handle massive international cases more speedily, they will benefit from the assistance of law clerks, who so significantly assist other international and national courts.

The Court has noted with further appreciation the report and draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly by the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization (A/54/33), which lend support both to increased budgetary resources for the Court and to the measures taken by it to accelerate the disposition of cases.

The Court wishes to offer timely justice to those who come to it. Other international courts successfully function while affording parties less time for oral argument. It may be that the era when the International Court of Justice routinely affords States weeks rather than days, and days rather than hours for oral argument, may be coming to an end. The restricted time limits imposed upon States in their presentation of oral argument in the context of advisory opinions has not given them apparent difficulty.

The financial resources of the Court cannot be divorced from those of the Organization that provides them. The financial fabric of the United Nations must be

repaired, most fundamentally by renewed performance of the treaty obligations of Members of the United Nations to pay their assessments, as determined by this General Assembly in the exercise of the authority deliberately and expressly entrusted to it by the terms of the Charter. The binding character of those assessments was affirmed by the Court in 1962, when it held that the exercise of the power of apportionment creates the obligation, specifically stated in Article 17, paragraph 2 of the Charter, of each Member to bear that part of the expenses which is apportioned to it by the General Assembly. Failure to meet that obligation not only has the gravest effects on the life of the Organization, but transgresses the principles of free consent, good faith and *pacta sunt servanda*, which are at the heart of international law and relations.

I said at the outset that where one stands depends on where one sits. In a measure, that is true. But of course the principles for which the Court stands are universal principles that merit universal support. As the Court enters the first century of the third millennium, it stands for international law, not international lawlessness; for the peaceful settlement of international disputes in conformity with international law, not with the will of the more powerful party; for international organization, not for international anarchy or for a State sovereignty which purports to be above the law. It stands for human rights — rights that can be effectively realized only within functioning systems of law, whether local, national or international.

The Court has no illusions about the extent of the progress that has been made; it does not underestimate the extent of the challenges faced by the United Nations at large. But it counts it a continuing and profound privilege to join with the members of this General Assembly to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to endeavour to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of my delegation, our warmest appreciation to the President of the International Court of Justice, Judge Stephen M. Schwebel, for his lucid introduction of the report of the Court contained in document A/54/4. The report contains a comprehensive account of cases and issues pertaining to the Court. The sizable array of cases clearly attests to the fact that the Court is the legal forum where the most complex and significant themes in international law today are being interpreted and applied. It also demonstrates that the Court, as the principal legal organ of the United Nations, is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities. In this regard, my delegation would like to ask Judge Stephen M. Schwebel to convey its sincere respect and esteem to the other judges of the Court.

Since its establishment in 1946, the International Court of Justice, as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has developed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. In the period between 1946 and the 1970s, the caseload of the International Court of Justice was not so burdensome. However, for several reasons there has been a substantial increase in the number of cases before the Court since the early 1980s. One of the main reasons may be that the decolonization and breakup of certain States have dramatically expanded the Court's client base, which now includes 188 States. Moreover, the change in attitude towards adjudication and the evolving perception of the alleged bias of the Court in developing countries since the end of the cold war have also contributed to a marked increase in the docket sheet of the Court. Reflecting the fundamental new direction that international relations have recently taken, the Court's subject matter has also dramatically expanded to include a wide variety of issues: maritime boundaries, territorial sovereignty, the use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, diplomatic relations, hostage-taking, the right to asylum, nationality, expropriation of foreign property and rights of passage. In this respect, the work of the International Court of Justice is fundamental for the maintenance of international peace and security in today's world.

My delegation shares the view of the International Court of Justice regarding the increase in its workload and the implications of this development, as contained in the report in document A/53/326. The Court has responded to the dual challenges of an increased workload and insufficient resources through measures such as rationalizing the Registry, utilizing electronic technology and streamlining work procedures. While commending this work done by the International Court of Justice so far, we hope that practical measures will be taken as soon as possible to provide the Court with sufficient means to continue the important work entrusted to it by the Charter.

There is every reason to suppose that the rise in the number of cases coming before the Court will continue, and even accelerate, in the future. Indeed, experience

tells us that judicial recourse takes place more frequently in times of detente than in times of tension. Furthermore, more countries will in the future bring cases to the Court by special agreement. Many multilateral treaties now refer disputes to the International Court of Justice for settlement, and there has been a gradual increase in the number of States accepting the optional clause of the Court's Statute. As a result, we must take the Court's appeal for more resources into serious account. In this regard, my delegation takes note with great interest that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has given consideration to the budgetary request of the Court and expects that other relevant bodies of the Organization will also respond to the legitimate demands of the Court.

I now turn to the publications of the Court. This issue is very much bound up with the financial resources of the Court. My delegation regrets that there is a backlog in the publication of the Court's *Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders*, as well as other documents. These publications will certainly contribute to the progressive development of international law and its codification, as well as better understanding of international law, by allowing readers easy access to valuable information on the work of the Court. While welcoming the efforts of the Court to disseminate such publications via electronic database, my delegation hopes that the publication of the Court's documents will be substantially improved in the near future.

On the eve of a new millennium, we should make the International Court of Justice more responsive to the demands of a dynamic and changing world. A new and strengthened role for the Court should be sought in the context of the changing structures of both international society and international law. How to respond to the new realities of an increasingly decentralized international society will be the main challenge for the International Court of Justice in the future. If the challenges facing the Court are not sufficiently addressed, the dispute settlement mechanism offered by the Court will likely lose its credibility and perhaps its pre-eminent role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to draw the attention of the other Member States to the meetings of experts held in The Hague and St. Petersburg, in May and June of this year, respectively. Honouring the centennial of the 1899 first International Peace Conference, experts, rapporteurs and legal advisors from Member States met with specialists in the fields of disarmament, humanitarian law and the laws of war. To strengthen the role of the International Court of Justice, participants tackled a variety of issues facing the Court, such as the expansion of its advisory functions, widening access to contentious jurisdictions of the Court, the Court's powers of judicial review of the legality of actions of the Security Council and the composition of the Court itself.

My delegation is of the view that a thorough review of such medium and long-term proposals is needed because it could provide a useful guide to the challenges raised by the prospects for the functions of the Court in the coming century. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its thanks to Professors Francisco Orrego Vicuña and Christopher Pinto for their valuable report entitled "The peaceful settlement of disputes: prospects for the twenty-first century."

Allow me to conclude, by reaffirming on behalf of my delegation and the Republic of Korea, our steadfast and unwavering support for the valuable work of the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for my delegation to speak once again during the Assembly's consideration of the report of the International Court of Justice. I want at the outset to thank Mr. Schwebel, President of the Court, for having presented the report to us. His comments are always thought-provoking and invite discussion. We offer him our deepest appreciation.

Recent years have seen a considerable increase in the legal work of the Court. By way of illustration, let me just call attention to the fact that during the period covered by the report — that is, from 1 August 1998 until 31 July 1999 — 18 new contentious cases were submitted to the Court and there was one request for an advisory opinion. Even though some of the new cases are interrelated or, perhaps, related to decisions handed down in the framework of other cases before the Court, the fact is that they result in a great deal of work. Quite apart from how the cases may be interrelated, each and every one of them has to be dealt with separately and with special care, in accordance with the particular circumstances. Likewise, we must stress that these 18 new cases come on top of the ongoing ones. Thus overall our highest court now has before it 27 cases, and it is possible that new ones will be added in the near future.

These new developments are the source of mixed feelings. On the one hand, it is certainly satisfying to see that the International Court of Justice is increasingly

considered the most appropriate forum for resolving inter-State disputes. Although ideally these disputes should never arise, being able to submit them to the Court offers many advantages. The intervention of an impartial and permanent body that applies international law and issues binding decisions, ensures the parties that their dispute will be handled fairly. At the same time, the judicial decisions provide an additional means of defining the rules of international law and make a valuable contribution to the development of international law.

However, in the current situation, marked as it is by financial restrictions, an increase in the Court's judicial work is a cause of serious concern. We must recognize that the Court's procedures are not sufficiently expeditious and that budgetary limitations are affecting the administration of justice and, therefore, the discharge of the responsibility entrusted to the Court by the Charter.

The judicial settlement of disputes is a complicated task, and as a rule its results are not immediately felt. If we add to these difficulties the fact that the proceedings are slow, or if there is a lack of resources to handle the case at issue, the outcome may well be counterproductive. Sometimes excessive delays, rather than facilitating the settlement of a dispute, may make it worse.

As a country resolutely devoted to peace and firmly dedicated to respect for international law, Mexico has been particularly receptive to the various appeals made by the Court for an increase in its budget. At the same time, we have pronounced in favour of rationalizing the Court's procedures in a two ways. First, we have encouraged the Court to adopt all possible measures to make the processing of its cases easier. On the other hand, we have pointed out that States that come before the Court should heed the Court's recommendations and do their utmost to facilitate the handling of their cases. This, among other things, would mean reducing the extent of their arguments — formulating them clearly and concisely — and, as much as possible, presenting their documents already translated into the Court's working languages.

Today we are very pleased to see that some of the requests of the Court, particularly those related to an increase in its budget, are being heard. This is in part a result of the efforts Mexico has made in this regard, both within the General Assembly and under the framework of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization. This year, upon Mexico's initiative, the Sixth Committee will adopt a draft resolution thanking the Court for the initial measures it has adopted to deal as efficiently as possible with the increased work load. The draft resolution also calls on the Court to continue to review its procedures and urges States that come before the Court to abide by the Court's guidance in this area. It urges the adoption of any other measure that might help speed up the proceedings.

Likewise, during its 1999 sessions, the Special Committee on the Charter felt there was a need to consider the budgetary request of the Court, given the urgency of this issue, and the Special Committee welcomed with satisfaction the fact that this request would be considered by the relevant United Nations bodies.

Mexico notes with satisfaction that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) has considered the budgetary requests of the Court, and, given the increase in the Court's work load, the ACABQ has recommended to the Fifth Committee an increase of the resources allocated to the Court. At the same time we note that the recommended increase does not reflect the minimum specified by the Court in paragraph 43 of the report in document A/53/326. We believe that the increase, such as it is, is a positive development, but much remains to be done in this area. As the Court has said, the General Assembly must not underestimate the importance of peaceful settlement of international conflicts by means of the law.

It is indispensable to ensure that the resources allocated to our highest judicial body be at least the minimum required to deal with the cases submitted to it. Preferential treatment to other bodies having subsidiary jurisdiction cannot and should not continue indefinitely. Until this situation is corrected, the issue should remain a special priority item on our agenda. Mexico will continue to promote the strengthening of our highest judicial body.

This year marks the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law. One of the principal objectives of this Decade has been the promotion of the use of the International Court of Justice and the full implementation of its judgments. We believe that the achievements of this Decade are encouraging, though we note that further progress in the respect for and observance of the norms of international law is still needed.

We note with concern that some of the Court's decisions, particularly those of a precautionary nature, are not always respected by the parties concerned, thus putting at risk the very integrity of the cause in question. We believe that there is a need to strengthen respect not only for the judgements but for all the Court's orders and measures. From this rostrum we appeal to all States that are involved in cases before the Court to abide by the Court's decisions. This is the minimum requirement for giving judicial certainty to the actions that we, the States, have voluntarily submitted to the Court's jurisdiction.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): Allow me at the outset to thank the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Stephen Schwebel, for his very clear and lucid introduction of the report on the activities of the International Court of Justice for the period 1 August 1998 to 31 July 1999, contained in document A/54/4. I would also like to commend Mr. Schwebel and the members of the Court for the active role they are playing in the strengthening of the rule of law in international relations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the International Court of Justice, as it has an important role to play in the settlement of international disputes and the maintenance of international peace and security through its judgments and advisory opinions. The Court does indeed complement the work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and bilateral negotiations between States. It is an organ, in our view, that accords equal treatment to all nations and thus ensures the security and protection of small States.

Although the Court today is not perceived as the last resort in the settlement of international disputes, we are encouraged to note that it is regaining its original role of being the most authoritative interpreter of the legal obligations of States in disputes between them. This is a welcome development. This authoritative interpretation of legal obligations has indeed, in most cases, helped parties to a dispute to clarify their positions and provided them with legal conclusions on which to further their negotiations. This has consequently led to the diffusion of tension and in some cases helped avoid armed confrontation.

The work of the International Court of Justice has taken a new turn during the past few years, as evidenced by the increased number of States Members of the United Nations that are now parties to the Statute of the Court; those that have made declarations recognizing as compulsory the jurisdiction of the Court; and new contentious cases before the Court. All this shows that the international community is regaining confidence in the Court and its jurisdiction.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that my Government has already begun the internal process which will lead to its declaration recognizing the jurisdiction of the Court. To this end, my delegation urges more members to seriously consider recognizing the jurisdiction of the Court to further strengthen its work.

The increased recognition of the Court's jurisdiction has meant an increase in its workload. Unfortunately, despite this increase, there has been no corresponding growth in the financial resources made available to the Court. While the momentum is there to utilize the International Court of Justice, Member States should not be discouraged from resorting to it by having the resolution of cases delayed for the simple reason that the Court has no resources to deal with them.

It is therefore important that increased funding be extended to the Court to ensure that this organ, which assists in the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means and contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security, may discharge its duties effectively.

My delegation concurs with the statement by President Schwebel that if the Court is to fulfil its potential as the Organization's principal judicial organ, it must be afforded the resources to work as intensively and expeditiously as burgeoning international recourse to the Court demands. In the same spirit, we also appeal to all Member States that are in a position to do so to contribute towards the International Court of Justice's Trust Fund, which assists States in the judicial settlement of disputes. In this regard, we thank the Government of Japan for its recent contribution of $24,000 to the Fund.

We welcome the opening of the Museum of the Court in the Peace Palace, which was inaugurated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 17 May 1999. The Museum will serve as an invaluable source of history on the evolution of the Court and a rich reference for the world's legal systems. It is indeed a fount of knowledge for professionals, academicians and, in particular, students of international law. It is the hope of my delegation that the Museum will enhance the proper understanding of the functioning of the Court by Member States.

In conclusion, we also welcome the many talks and lectures on the Court given by the members of the International Court of Justice in order to improve public understanding of the judicial settlement of international disputes, the jurisdiction of the Court and its function in contentious and advisory cases. This, to my delegation, was a major contribution by the Court to one of the objectives of the Decade of International Law, which will come to a close this year, in relation to the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law. We believe that these lectures are very useful and we urge the Court to continue the practice, as they promote awareness of international law.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Stephen Schwebel, our deep appreciation for his introductory statement in the debate on the Court's report. The Court can be proud of the authority it has conferred upon the process of judicial settlement, which was so long relegated to the margins. The Court can be proud, in the words of President Bedjaoui, of having secularized international justice and made it a landmark of our century. Proof of this is the Court's participation — of course, at the request of States — in the management of the great concerns of the world today: security, human rights, the environment and so on.

Mr. Schwebel and his peers, in speaking out on the major issues relating to the sacrosanct sovereignty of States, are exercising a profession that is unique in the world. Certainly, they do so with pride, but they also and above all do so with a great deal of humility. How could it be otherwise? They know that it is already uncomfortable enough for human beings to pass judgement on other human beings, touching as it does on almost metaphysical problems. "Judges of the Earth, you are gods." This equation of Henri François d'Aguesseau, Chancellor of France, is more a reflection of an acute sense of crushing responsibility than an expression of admiration.

Thus, what can be said of the President of the Court and of justice that is rendered by men upon States? This is all the more difficult and painful given the considerable vested interests that are always at stake. Fortunately, President Schwebel's conscience is sensitive to the point of obsession.

Having said that, I will now turn to the report on the Court's activities. Perhaps we should start with a dream and a wish. The dream is of an international community where everyone fully recognizes the primacy of law and of peace. The wish is that together, as we stand at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, we resolve firmly to spare no effort to make this dream a reality.

The International Court of Justice stands at a crossroads. Created in a particular set of historical circumstances, it has seen its role grow continuously throughout the years. Today it must respond to a greater number of appeals on increasingly complex matters. At the same time, it must face the emergence of new courts with universal jurisdiction. I am thinking particularly of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, as well as of the trend of resorting to alternative methods of settling disputes, such as international arbitration.

In view of the circumstances, the report of the International Court of Justice of which we are seized invites us to wonder about the position that the international community accords in real terms today to the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. In our view, this position can best be appreciated by considering three main criteria or indicators: declarations of acceptance, cases brought before the Court and the implementation of its decisions.

The number of declarations made under article 36, paragraph 2, of its Statute is the first indicator of the acceptance of the Court in the domain of international relations. This indicator is particularly important given the optional character of the recognition of the legal jurisdiction of the Court. The consensual nature of the bases of international judicial competence means that no State can be summoned before a jurisdiction without its prior consent.

According to the report of which we are seized, on 31 July 1999, the 185 Member States of the United Nations at the time, as well as Nauru and Switzerland, were parties to the Statute of the International Court. However, on the same date, only 62 States, 18 of which were from Africa, had made declarations recognizing the Court's jurisdiction as compulsory.

Universal acceptance of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction therefore remains a common challenge to be addressed. My delegation appeals to countries that have not yet adhered to the optional clause of compulsory jurisdiction to inscribe this item on their agendas and to give it the greatest attention. Is not the refusal to

recognize the Court's jurisdiction an anachronism, a throwback to the era of the unlimited sovereignty of States?

We consider that the question of submission by all States to international jurisdiction and international law should not be included among the parameters that today define the sovereignty of States.

We are not the only ones to demand insistently that Member States either recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court or withdraw or mitigate the paralysing reservations that accompany such recognition.

In his report "An Agenda for Peace" the United Nations Secretary-General asked all States to accept the Court's jurisdiction unreservedly before the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law.

We will always advocate the idea that international tribunals with compulsory jurisdiction should determine when international law has been violated, and that they should be used as a framework for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

To ensure the primacy of international law, it is essential courts of international jurisdiction be established to interpret and apply in all fairness the equitable rules that govern peace and war, cooperation, development and the protection of the individual.

The second indicator that permits us to appreciate the effectiveness of the principal judicial organ of the United Nations is the number of cases brought before the Court. The declaration referred to in Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the Court is certainly of fundamental importance, but as Judge Ranjeva has emphasized, it is more a matter of intentions, since the number of cases brought before the Court is the fullest actual expression of States' acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction.

The report before us shows that the number of cases on the Court's docket continues to grow significantly. In my country's view, this is a genuine source of satisfaction. This process should certainly be encouraged.

Cameroon, as a State of law, attaches great importance to the peaceful settlement of disputes through courts, and therefore by recourse to the International Court of Justice, as other forms of settlement have turned out to be ineffective. This position is recalled constantly by our head of State, President Paul Biya. My country's position is further underpinned by resolution 3232 (XXIX), in which the General Assembly reaffirms that recourse to judicial settlement of disputes, particularly referral to the International Court of Justice, should not be considered an unfriendly act between States.

The growing number of cases brought before the Court, and its concomitant heavy workload, calls urgently for us to do everything possible to ensure that the Court can continue to fulfil its function as the principal judicial organ of our Organization in the most effective way. This means, of course, that the Court needs to be provided with additional human, material and financial resources. My delegation welcomes the broad consensus that is taking shape on this point. But it also means that we must reflect calmly on the Court's organization, its functioning and its administration. In our view, these two processes should be combined. At the same time, they must be carried out with strict respect for independence and impartiality, which, as we all know, are the essential characteristics of a court.

Increasing the resources made available to the Court and improving its functioning are all the more necessary because, in addition to its jurisdiction over contentious issues, its consultative work has also been experiencing significant development, as indicated in the report before us.

I now come to the third and last important indicator of the Court's acceptance and effectiveness: the implementation of its decisions. In our view, willing and speedy implementation of the Court's decisions is a demonstration of faith in international courts of law, an act that gives legal recourse its full meaning and weight. Indeed, what use would it be to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, to submit cases to it or to appear before it if in the end a State was not ready to accept the Court's decision?

The universal mission of international law and the International Court of Justice, and the fact that the latter represents all the great civilizations and the main legal systems of the world, can only provide assurance of the high quality of its decisions.

Over the years, the Court has developed an interesting jurisprudence on various issues, of which some are of great interest for the African countries, including mine — notably, the case on the question of boundaries.

The stability of the borders inherited from colonial times represents one of the mainstays of international order in Africa. That is why the judicial treatment of this question, which led the Court to insist on the general applicability of the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, garnered the support of the African countries. This can be seen in the willing and speedy implementation of the Court's decisions on this issue, which was forthcoming because the Court strictly applied an existing law and took the opportunity to give it general applicability.

Generally speaking, the implementation of the substantive decisions of the Court, even the most delicate ones, has never met with any difficulty on the part of the African States. Let us hope that this wise approach will last and will inspire the whole of the international community.

Overall, it seems that the importance of the role of the Court is not being called into question. But in regard to the three indicators that we have examined, it has become clear that the principal judicial body of the United Nations should be considerably strengthened.

Thus, I wish to conclude as I started: with a dream and a wish. The dream is the dream of an international community where the primacy of law and peace is fully established. And the wish is that we all commit ourselves to working together to realize that dream.

Mr. Rebagliati (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to say that it is an honour for me to address this General Assembly under the effective and experienced guidance of its President. I would also like to thank the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Stephen Schwebel, for his eloquent introduction of the report of the Court over which he presides, a report which gives clear proof of the meaningful role that it plays in today's international community.

I take this opportunity also to offer well-deserved praise to Mr. Eduardo Valencia-Ospina, who has announced his retirement. Mr. Valencia-Ospina has performed an invaluable task as Registrar of the Court, prior to which he distinguished himself in the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs. We trust that he will remain connected with the system in some capacity.

The legal tradition of the Republic of Argentina and its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes is well known. Thus, the Argentine delegation wishes to join with those in the General Assembly who have expressed their satisfaction over the work being done by the International Court of Justice in the interpretation and application of international law.

I wish to reaffirm the great importance that the Republic of Argentina attaches to the International Court of Justice as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The Court's decisions are always an obligatory point of reference for all legal decisions made by the various agencies of our Government.

I am especially pleased to be able to refer to the Court's activity at a time when the international legal order has become stronger and when there is growing awareness of the need to promote effective respect for the legal norms that govern the international community. The large number of cases currently under consideration by the Court on questions of the most diverse nature shows that there is growing interest and willingness on the part of States to resolve their international disputes through the highest tribunal of the Organization.

Between the end of the main part of the fifty-third session and the beginning of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice heard questions of major relevance for the interpretation and identification of the norms and principles of international law. Confining ourselves only to the cases submitted in that period of time, we see that the Court was called upon to rule on disputes relating to the use of force — Yugoslavia versus Germany and other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo versus Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda; genocide — Croatia versus Yugoslavia; territorial disputes — Indonesia versus Malaysia; diplomatic protection — Guinea versus the Democratic Republic of the Congo; consular relations — Germany versus United States of America; and other equally important issues. This variety of topics, which is not an exhaustive list of the matters under consideration by the Court, clearly shows that the Court is the forum that analyses in a specific fashion the most complicated and relevant questions of international law.

The present vitality of the Court attests to the trust that the Court inspires in States, which can be measured not only by the large number of cases under consideration, but also by the importance to those involved of the issues to be decided. Such trust has grown out of the prestige of that institution, which has been able to preserve throughout its history the virtues that characterize it: authority, integrity, impartiality and independence.

This growing activity of the Court, which must be applauded as a highly positive development, nevertheless involves certain dangers. First, we have the problem that the Court may not have adequate means to deal with the growing demands made on it. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the Court with the necessary resources to allow it to carry out its growing activity in proper conditions.

The problem of lack of means is related to a second danger confronting the Court: that it may be used as a political arena. Indeed, the increase in the Court's activity has stimulated debate on whether certain disputes referred to the Court are of a political or legal nature. We must point out that any legal dispute involves political aspects and vice versa, and that the Court itself has, pointed out on many occasions that the fact that a legal dispute may contain political aspects is no obstacle to the Court's jurisdiction. However, this means that States are obligated to exercise their right to resort to the Court responsibly in order to avoid abusing such resort as a means for the settlement of disputes. In the final analysis, we must recall that it is entirely within the exclusive competence of the Court to decide whether the legal nature of a dispute is sufficient basis for the Court to have jurisdiction.

International relations are taking on an increasingly legal dimension. Therefore, jurisdictional methods for the settlement of disputes and the organs that are to resolve those disputes, have grown as much in number as have the subjects dealt with. Nevertheless, the Court is, and will continue to be, the focal point of the international community in the interpretation and application of international law.

I wish to conclude by thanking once again the judges of the International Court of Justice for their indefatigable and effective work, which is to the benefit of international peace and security. The Argentine Republic is convinced that the Court, with its well-deserved prestige, continues to make a contribution to consolidating the process of the establishment of a world order based on relations of friendship and cooperation among States in accordance with international law.

Mr. Hamid (Pakistan): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Stephen Schwebel, for presenting to the General Assembly in a lucid manner the annual report of the International Court of Justice covering the period from 1 August 1998 to 31 July 1999.

At the outset, I would like to reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to the work of the International Court of Justice, which is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The Court, which for many years has been the cornerstone of an international legal system built on respect for the rule of law, has played an indispensable role in helping Member States in the peaceful settlement of their disputes.

Since its inception in 1946, the Court has served as the focal point for the peaceful resolution of international disputes and for the development of international law through its judgments and advisory opinions. Its achievements in furthering the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter for maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and enhancing international cooperation in resolving disputes have been remarkable.

The success of the International Court of Justice in dealing with some of the most difficult international disputes of our time could be judged by the fact that the Court's decisions have been accepted by the States concerned and their implementation has posed no difficulty. This, besides enhancing the prestige of the Court, has enabled it to make a significant contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Pakistan believes that if all countries conducted their relations with other States in accordance with the principles of international law, there would be fewer disputes and conflicts, and recourse to the International Court of Justice would also be minimal. Unfortunately, this does not happen in the real world, and we often come across instances in which the norms and principles of international law are not respected and States resort to methods which are either in violation of established international norms or in breach of a bilateral or multilateral agreement to which they are party. In these circumstances, the presence of the International Court of Justice is a source of consolation for aggrieved States, which know where to turn for their grievances.

In recent years, though the Court has witnessed an increase in the volume of cases brought before it — which is indeed a reflection of the high respect acquired by the Court in the community of nations — there still remain a number of factors which impede States for referring cases to the Court. One of these factors is the financial implications of participation in proceedings before the Court. Sometimes States, in particular least developed and developing countries, do not have

sufficient financial resources to resort to the Court for resolution of their legal differences. In this regard, Pakistan was appreciative of the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish in 1989 a Trust Fund to assist States in the settlement of disputes through the International Court of Justice. Since the Fund is financed through voluntary contributions, we would call upon potential donors to make financial contributions to it, which would certainly be a contribution to the cause of international peace and justice.

Finally, I would like to say few words on the problems being faced by the Court due to financial constraints. In the recent past, there has been a manifold increase in the workload of the Court. However, the growth in its annual budget has not been proportionate to the increased caseload. In order to perform its functions and carry out its responsibilities, it is important that Court's work should not be hampered by the shortage of funds. We fully support the Court's request for an increase in the allocation of financial resources and call upon the competent bodies of the United Nations to consider on a priority basis the question of increasing the resources of the Court.

Mr. Droushiotis (Cyprus): It is a particular honour and pleasure for the delegation of Cyprus to address the General Assembly as it considers the report of the International Court of Justice. We attach great importance to the role and work of the International Court of Justice and to the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in conformity with justice and international law, as provided for in the United Nations Charter. This occasion offers us the opportunity to commend the Court highly on its significant work as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, and to pay tribute to and express our respect for its President, Judge Stephen M. Schwebel, and its members, who eminently serve the Court with dedication and distinction.

We are once again grateful to the President of the Court for his lucid introduction of the report and for his insightful remarks on the work and functioning of the Court. The annual address of the President of the Court to the General Assembly has become a welcome practice and a highlight of the item's consideration by the Assembly.

The increased activity of the Court, either through submission of contentious cases or through requests for advisory opinions, is a very welcome development. The diversity of cases before it — submitted by States from various regions of the world and differing legal systems, concerning a wide range of matters — is a positive reflection of the Court's general jurisdiction being open to all States and of the confidence and recognition the Court enjoys as the Organization's principal judicial organ. We hope that this growing willingness to resort to the Court and the prevailing "law habit" among States — as highlighted by the United Nations Decade of International Law — will be marked by an increase in the number of declarations by States recognizing without reservation the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, as contemplated by Article 36 of its Statute.

It is now widely recognized that the peaceful settlement of disputes within the framework of the Charter requires an integrated and coordinated approach combining more than one category of strategies of dispute settlement. A welcome development in this regard is the increasing recourse to the International Court of Justice in parallel with other methods of dispute resolution, which emphasizes the role of the Court in the United Nations system for the maintenance of international peace and security and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In this regard, chapter IV of the report in document A/54/4, on the role of the Court, which contains a summary of the points made by the President of the Court in his address to the Assembly last year, is highly notable. These points, in paragraph 266 of the report, are that the Court "is no longer seen solely as 'the last resort' in the resolution of disputes" and that "States may have recourse to the Court in parallel with other methods of dispute resolution, appreciating that such recourse may complement the work of the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as bilateral negotiations". It is also important that he observed that "in this combined process of dispute resolution, judicial recourse has helped parties clarify their positions and that the Court's decision in other cases has provided the parties with legal conclusions which they may use in framing further negotiations and in achieving the settlement of a dispute".

In this regard, I wish to recall that Cyprus has accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute. Moreover, we have declared our readiness to submit the legal components of the Cyprus problem to the International Court of Justice for adjudication, either by way of contentious or advisory proceedings.

A fitting example of this complementary strategy of political and judicial resolution of disputes working in parallel that readily comes to mind at this session, when the Assembly is presided over by Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab,

Foreign Minister of Namibia, is the Namibia case of 1971, through which the Court rendered an advisory opinion, upon the request of the Security Council, on the legal obligations of States arising from the illegal presence of the then regime of South Africa in Namibia.

Also noteworthy in that case, by way of example of the Court's important contributions to human rights law, was the Court's finding that apartheid was objectively illegal and was a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

In addition, the Court, as the most authoritative interpreter of the United Nations Charter, determined the binding character of resolutions of the Security Council under Article 25 of the Charter.

There are several more recent examples of combining political and judicial resolution of disputes, as set out by the report of the Court and mentioned by its President earlier this morning.

Furthermore, in relation to the role and functioning of the Court, I would like to note that at major treaty-making conferences and other legal forums, Cyprus has consistently advocated compulsory third-party dispute settlement procedures entailing a binding decision. In this regard, we have accorded the highest respect to the Court as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

Lastly, as appears in the report, the increasing caseload of the Court places great pressure on its human and financial resources. The Court should be provided with the means it needs to function properly and effectively as the Organization's principal judicial organ.

May I mention in passing that as a token of our support for the Court and the importance we attach to the peaceful settlement of disputes, Cyprus was among the first States to contribute to the Court's Trust Fund established to assist developing countries financially in availing themselves of and utilizing the Court.

Being a small State, Cyprus relies on the principles and norms of international law and on the United Nations Charter and on their strict and full application. Cyprus ascribes great importance to the International Court of Justice as the highest judicial organ of the United Nations.

In view of the announced end of the tenure of the President of the Court, Judge Stephen M. Schwebel, and of the Registrar of the Court, Mr. Eduardo Valencia-Ospina, we wish to express our highest appreciation for their commitment and dedication to the work of the Court. President Schwebel's contributions to the Court have been meaningful and profound. While they will be retiring from the Court, we look forward in the future to their continued valuable contributions in the field of International law.

Mr. Zmeevski (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the work of the International Court of Justice, for, as one of the main organs of the United Nations, it must be in the forefront of efforts to achieve, within the framework of its mandate, the goals of the Charter of the United Nations.

What we are referring to, of course, is efforts in support of international peace and security. The Court has already made an important contribution to defending the key provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, and its decision as to the binding nature of those provisions of our Charter that refer to the non-resort to force has become a cornerstone of international law. And now, at a time when humankind must determine the parameters of the world in which we wish to live, the Court takes on even greater importance.

On the threshold of a new millennium, we must work together to develop a comprehensive interpretation of our international commitments in the interest of humankind as a whole. Previous generations of human civilization have handed down to us a broad panoply of peaceful means of reaching decisions, including bringing cases before the International Court. Reason, when it is collective legal reason, can be much more effective than the use of force in international affairs.

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Mr. Ivanov, underscored in his statement during this session of the General Assembly,

> "In general, we should take an extremely careful approach to coercive measures; what is more, we must not allow them to turn into a repressive mechanism for influencing States and peoples that are not to the liking of some." *(A/54/PV.6)*

This was the thinking behind the proposal made by Russia and Belarus to the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization to request a consultative decision from the International Court on the legal

implications of the use of armed force in circumvention of the Charter.

International legality is a mechanism for the maintenance of peace, and it is peace that makes it possible to mete out that justice. If we are to work for peace and sustainable development without violence, we must redouble our efforts to strengthen the international legal basis for a global order and ensure the rule of law in international affairs. The efforts of the International Court could go a long way towards making this happen.

One of the suggestions contained in the proposal by the President of Russia, Mr. Yeltsin, on a world concept for the twenty-first century is to make broader use, within the context of reforming and adapting the United Nations to a changed world, of follow-up and implementation measures and of Court mechanisms and procedures. The goal would be to provide further safeguards against the circumvention of international law and to enhance the role of the International Court with respect to the application and strengthening of mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

It is, of course, the evolution of world affairs that dictates the advisability of developing the provisions of international law and adapting them to new realities. However, this should be done not by bringing individual cases before the Court but by sitting down together and taking appropriate decisions within the context of existing provisions of international law. This is the reason for the Russian initiative to discuss at the Millennium Summit the legal aspects of the use of force in international relations in a globalized world. We call upon all States to enter into a broad-based, open dialogue on this issue.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It would doubtless be useful to do research, under United Nations auspices, on this subject. In this way we would be able to objectively analyse the provisions of international law regulating the use of force in international relations; to study the ways in which these provisions have been interpreted and applied, including in rulings of the International Court; to compare the requirements of the Charter of the United Nations with similar equivalent provisions and standards in regional instruments; to collect examples of Security Council actions taken in the context of responding to so-called humanitarian crises; and to list precedents of the use of force in circumvention of the Charter of the United Nations to learn of the reasoning behind them, the reaction of the international community, and the consequences for third countries.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Stephen Schwebel, for the very comprehensive account he has given of the work of the Court. We agree with him that if the Court is to fulfil its potential as the principal judicial organ of the Organization, it needs resources so that it can work as intensively and as effectively as is required by the increasing number of cases brought before the Court by States.

The entire budget of the International Court today is $11 million a year. Percentage-wise, this is less than the equivalent amount allocated for the Court in the 1946 United Nations budget. By comparison, the Yugoslavia Tribunal has received $94 million. Furthermore, while the International Court has 57 staff members, the Yugoslavia Tribunal has 794. We should give very careful thought to whether this disproportion is justified.

The annual discussion of the Court's report in the General Assembly is proof of its significance to the international community and also demonstrates how important it is for us to strengthen cooperation between all United Nations bodies with a view to coordinating efforts to implement the purposes and principles of the Organization. We believe that we should consider at this session a practical and constructive way of strengthening the role of the highest judicial organ of the United Nations, and we are prepared to contribute fully to this endeavour.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its wholehearted gratitude for the report of the International Court of Justice and its introduction by the President of the Court, Judge Stephen Schwebel.

The legal settlement of disputes is indispensable for the peaceful development of the international community. Differences with respect to law or facts, if politicized, can become threats to international peace and security. Territorial disputes in particular can lead to military escalation. In this connection, recourse to the International Court of Justice is a fundamental mechanism for reducing international tension and for the final settlement of disputes between States. My delegation takes note with satisfaction of the work done by the Court to foster peace and security in the various cases that are before it.

As the principal judicial body of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice also plays a key role in the progressive development of contemporary international law. Its jurisprudence, in contentious cases as well as in advisory opinions, not only determines the law for parties in conflict, but also sheds light on questionable or controversial areas of the law for the benefit of other States. In many instances, the Court has adopted progressive positions that have pointed the way for and consolidated the development of the international legal order. We also take note of its role as the authority for interpreting the provisions of the United Nations Charter. Costa Rica is grateful and expresses its appreciation to the Court for this work.

My delegation is aware of the practical problems experienced by the Court in recent years, which result from an increase in the number of cases and requests for advisory opinions. Nevertheless, we do not believe that such problems need result from the number of cases or that we should therefore discourage the Court from taking them on. On the contrary, we believe that the increase in the number of cases is a positive sign of the will of States to submit themselves to the principles of law in the conduct of their international relations.

We believe that the practical difficulties in the work of this lofty tribunal result from the budgetary constraints to which it is subjected to in the context of its growing responsibilities. We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions have requested a small increase in the budget of the Court. My delegation will support this increase when it is considered by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, and we trust that other delegations will do likewise.

However, we fear that such additional resources will prove inadequate to enable the Court to tackle all of its responsibilities. We believe that in future budgets, greater funding should be allocated to the Court. My delegation would welcome an increase in the personnel of the Court, including additional archival, computer and secretariat staff, in addition to a professional team to provide technical and legal assistance to the judges and the presidency, as suggested in the report of the Secretary-General on the consequences for the Court of the increase in the number of cases before it, which was issued last year. With regard to assistants and gratis personnel, my delegation reaffirms the position that it has expressed repeatedly in the Fifth Committee.

We thank the Court for the efforts it has made to improve its work. My delegation is actively supporting various proposals in the Special Committee on the Charter and in the Sixth Committee to strengthen the International Court of Justice, and we welcomed with satisfaction the draft resolution which is included in paragraph 122 of the report (A/54/33) of the Special Committee. However, we believe that several areas of the Court's activity could be further improved, and while we scrupulously support the principle of the judicial independence of the Court, we should like, with all due respect, to make a few suggestions. We believe that the International Court of Justice is a mechanism in the service of States, and if it is to remain valid it must respond actively and effectively to the needs of those who use it.

Would it not therefore be appropriate for the judges to limit the length of their dissenting or separate opinions to no more than 5 or 10 pages? Would there not be an improvement in judicial activity if States elected judges who could understand easily both official languages and if we imposed age limits in electing judges? Would it not be fair to provide more opportunities for women to become members of the Court? Would it not be appropriate for States to elect judges exclusively from countries that have accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court in accordance with Article 36, paragraphs 2 and 5, of the Statute? Do not some of the recommendations of Professor Bowett, Professor Crawford, Sir Ian Sinclair and Sir Arthur Watts, published in 1996, have validity?

We trust that the Court, as well as States, will continue to consider, through both the Special Committee on the Charter and the General Assembly, possible improvements in the practices of this principal judicial organ of the Organization.

Finally, we should like to thank the Court for the excellent work of dissemination that it has been carrying out through the Internet. This is invaluable, especially to developing States, which sometimes have difficulties in gaining access to information about the latest activities of jurisprudence.

Mr. Tudela (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to congratulate Judge Stephen Schwebel for the detailed report on the work of the International Court of Justice at its previous session, which he introduced to us today. Peru takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to international law and its firm support for

the activities of the Court as the principal judicial body of the United Nations. We are pleased to see that there has been a gradual increase in recourse to the Court, as reflected by the fact that 18 new contentious cases and one advisory case were submitted to the Court during its previous session.

We will not on this occasion refer to the diverse matters that are before the Court in contentious cases, but we believe that it is necessary to emphasize that its excellent jurisprudence has significantly contributed to the progressive institutionalization of international law and that, in addition, in many cases the Court has served as a forum in which, while preparing their pleas, States in litigation have identified points of convergence that have laid the foundations for subsequent agreement.

Furthermore, with regard to its advisory function, the Court, through its 23 advisory opinions, has made important contributions as the authority for interpreting the United Nations Charter and in deciding juridical matters that have arisen within the domain of the activities of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the 16 organizations authorized to request advisory opinions. Of these, we accord particular importance to the Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, which points to the urgent need for States to undertake negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The financial situation of the Court is cause for concern for Peru, particularly when we take into account the increase in the number of cases that are being submitted to it. If we want the Court to continue to make its important contribution with the same degree of efficiency, we believe it necessary for the United Nations to pay particular attention to the legitimate demand for the Court to be provided with sufficient financial resources to adequately handle the work created not only by the increase in the number of cases but also by the need to maintain and increase the information service that the Court has provided through its Internet site. In this context, we are pleased to see that that site, which was inaugurated in September 1997, is being consistently improved, while the many visitors that enter the site include a growing number of diplomats, lawyers, students, politicians and members of the general public.

Peru welcomes the improvements achieved in this area and urges the Court, and particularly its Computerization Committee, to continue its efforts to use computers to publicize its work. In contrast with the progress in this area, as chapter IX of the report of the Court points out, publications are suffering from a lamentable delay — basically due to the Court's delicate financial situation — which we hope will be overcome, particularly with regard to the Court's *Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents* and *Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders*.

Finally, we are also pleased by the inauguration of the Museum of the Court in the Peace Palace in May of this year by the Secretary-General. We believe that this can further promote knowledge among the visiting public of the functions of the Court, of the institution of judicial resolution of international disputes and of the importance of international law and justice in the preservation of peace.

Peru, which throughout its history has shown in its international relations a deep attachment to international law and which has on occasion resorted to the jurisdiction of the Court, will persevere in its efforts so that the Court can continue to attain its lofty goals in the pursuit of peace and of the rule of law. To this end, Peru urges all States that are involved in disputes to submit them to the Court in order to find peaceful solutions under the protection of international law.

Mr. Abdullah (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to say that we are pleased and honoured to extend our thanks to the President of the International Court of Justice and to the honourable members of the Court for the comprehensive report on the Court and its work from August 1998 to July 1999.

We would also like to express our satisfaction at the statement by Judge Stephen Schwebel, the President of the Court, before the General Assembly today; we thank him for his comprehensive statement.

It is noteworthy that the submission of the Court's report to the General Assembly at its current session coincides with the conclusion of the Decade of International Law, one of whose four major objectives was to "promote means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, including resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice". This imbues the Court's current report with a special character, since this objective for the Decade of International Law coincides with the supreme objective behind the establishment of the International Court of Justice in 1946: that the Court should be an effective, efficient judicial means for the peaceful settlement of

disputes. Since the Court stands for the enforcement of the principles of neutrality and justice in international relations, resorting to it to settle disputes is a true measure of civilization and a genuine measure of inclination towards and yearning for peace.

Sixty-two of the world's States have so far accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court provided for in Article 36, paragraph 2, of its Statute. My country is greatly honoured to be among those States. In addition to that Article, about 100 international conventions contain provisions for settling disputes by resort to the International Court of Justice. This reassures us of the growing role of the Court in the area of international relations and the judicial settlement of disputes. In this regard, we reiterate the call made by the General Assembly for Member States to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court.

An increase in the Court's resources, enabling it to shoulder the growing burdens referred to in the reports of the Court this year and last year, is relevant to the growth of the role of the Court and necessary for according it full respect. The Court cannot but respond to its duty in considering the cases brought before it and handing down the advisory opinions required of it. The United Nations, in turn, should make the provision of necessary and sufficient resources to the Court a duty and a high priority, regardless of the financial constraints facing the United Nations itself; for the provision of sufficient resources is linked to one of the most important principles of the United Nations: the maintenance of peace. Moreover, the additional resources requested by the Court are modest, and the United Nations should find no difficulty in securing them.

In the report submitted by the President of the Court, there was an important reference to the fact that resorting to the Court at times of tension and crisis allows for a relaxation of tensions even before a settlement is reached, and in some cases permits the resumption and success of stalled political negotiations. This shows the Court's potential, by virtue of its character and its work, for guaranteeing the peaceful settlement of disputes, even at their most tense. Similarly, the report mentions that the instances of resort to the Court in times of peace outnumber those in times of tension and conflict. This means that the States in conflict resort to the Court of their own volition, hand in hand, without necessarily allowing the dispute to undermine the links, bonds and relations existing between them. This, we think, enhances peace-building and promotes the culture of peace.

The unique situation of the International Court of Justice makes us all the more certain of the importance of its role; hence our constant demand for the full implementation of the Charter's provisions that prevent the work and responsibilities of the Court from being swallowed up by other United Nations bodies.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 13?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 26

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/180)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.14)

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Hassouna (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President as sincerely as possible on his election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, thanks to him, this will be a successful session, particularly given how historic it is to have the last session of the century presided over by a freedom fighter well known for his experience, his skills and his diplomacy. The President has done so much for our brotherly country Namibia, a country highly recognized and respected throughout the Arab world.

As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, the world is in an optimistic mood, as clearly expressed by all the delegations speaking during this session. In their statements, the various States have praised the role of the United Nations as a whole and have spoken of its noble tasks, as well as of their desire to see the Organization succeed in fulfilling its tasks and responsibilities despite the many new challenges we face as we move into a new century with so much change at the international, regional and national levels.

For its part, the League of Arab States is also looking towards the new millennium with confidence and

optimism. We are looking forward to even more close and constructive cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, so that together we can offer the world peace, stability and mutual understanding and create a world based on dialogue between civilizations, on conciliation and on respect for moral values and the rule of law in the relations between nations and peoples.

The League of Arab States is the foremost regional organization, established in 1945 within the framework of the international order that emerged at the end of the Second World War. The League is now embarking on the third millennium with a full awareness of its increasing role as a partner of the United Nations in the various spheres of life — in politics, economics, society, culture, law and administration. We are supported in this endeavour by the current approach to modernizing its structures and mechanisms. These efforts include the establishment of, *inter alia*, a free-trade area among the Arab States, an agreement to combat terrorism, an Arab court of justice and mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. All these measures are aimed at enabling our regional organization to cope with the new regional and global realities.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in A/54/180 outlines the contacts and consultations undertaken recently between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, as well as between the League's Permanent Observer and high-ranking officials of the United Nations. Much has been done on questions of common interest. Representatives of the League of Arab States have had very high-level consultations, for example with Secretary-General Kofi Annan, during the last two sessions of the General Assembly. They have spoken on regional and international issues of concern to the Arab world, including the question of Palestine, the Middle East peace process, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and the Comoros.

There have undoubtedly been successful efforts in the containment or resolution of many crises, such as the Lockerbie issue, some phases of the conflict between the United Nations and Iraq, and the problem of Somalia. These successes are the result of the constant process of consultation and the constructive approach of the two sides in this dialogue.

The cooperative relationship between the United Nations and the Arab League took another turn for the better this year at the very fruitful meetings of the secretariats of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and their specialized agencies. The meeting of the secretariats took a very close look at the areas in which the two organizations work together and at areas where more could be done to cooperate. Among the most important achievements of this meeting was the agreement to hold a sectoral meeting at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in Beirut in May 2000, on the subject of youth and employment. This meeting would be of great economic and social importance for the Arab region. The Arab League would like to thank the Secretariat for its constant efforts to make sure that the enhanced relationship between our two organizations continues successfully.

Discussion of the report on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States is very much in tune with the efforts of these international organizations to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions. In pursuit of this goal, the League of Arab States would like to reaffirm the notion that the international community, as represented by the United Nations, should respect and support the components of such peace. This means supporting, *inter alia*, the resolutions of international legitimacy, such as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace, and the right of Palestinians to self-determination, including an independent Palestinian State. The Palestinian people should receive the necessary support in their struggle to gain their legitimate rights and establish their own independent State on their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital. Israeli attempts to change the demography and geography of Jerusalem cannot bear fruit in the face of the resolute decisions of the Security Council.

The problem of Palestinian refugees must be justly resolved in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which stipulates their right to return to their land or the right to compensation, and the rejection of any attempts to settle them outside Palestine. The international community is called upon to fulfil its obligations towards the process of development and reconstruction in Palestinian lands, which would have a positive effect on the peace process. It has to ensure the success of the Palestinian festival, "Bethlehem 2000", in celebration of the end of the second millennium since the birth of Christ — may God's peace be upon him.

Security Council resolution 465 (1980), stating that Israeli settlements are illegal and must be dismantled, must be respected. The Fourth Geneva Convention requires Israel to adhere to these provisions and the convening of a new peace conference if Israeli violations persist, particularly the removal of populations from Palestinian territory, especially in and around Jerusalem. Such brotherly countries as Syria have claimed that negotiations should be continued at the point where they left off and that Israel is required to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967 and from South Lebanon as far as West Bekaa.

As for cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, we are working together to settle several issues that are very important to the future of the Arab region. It is our hope that these joint efforts will bear fruit in the very near future and that the dreams and goals of the peoples of the region will be fulfilled, particularly the participation of Palestine as a full United Nations Member State at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly; the full lifting of sanctions imposed against our brother peoples in Libya and Iraq, in compliance with resolutions of international legitimacy; the restoration of peace and stability to Somalia and the Comoros; the recovery by the United Arab Emirates of its full sovereignty over the three occupied Arabian Gulf islands; and the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

In this respect, the role played by the League of Arab States in support of the efforts of the United Nations in the field of international peace and security has grown to the extent that the United Nations now relies on us, as a regional organization, in several areas. It is therefore essential that the League of Arab States should enjoy the same full diplomatic status as other regional organizations working under Chapter VIII of the Charter. It is clear that the League of Arab States should enjoy the same status as the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization of African Unity. Our acquisition of that status will make it much easier for us to do our work and to address practically the difficulties that arise in our day-to-day activities and responsibilities.

Finally, we reiterate our support for the United Nations, confident as we are of the nobility of the goals, purposes and principles of its Charter, and reaffirm our full commitment to them. We again pledge our continued fruitful and constructive cooperation with the United Nations in order to address the various common issues raised in the draft resolution before us. The consensus by which the draft resolution has advanced to this point reflects a universal recognition by the General Assembly of positive and effective cooperation with the League of Arab States. We are also confident that this consensus can be extended to other resolutions on the Middle East, given the legitimate positions and equally legitimate claims of the members of the League.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.14. I would inform members that the Comoros and Iraq have become additional co-sponsors.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.14?

Draft resolution A/54/L.14 was adopted (resolution 54/9).

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind members that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. Gilon (Israel): The delegation of Israel has joined the consensus on the resolution for the sixth time in a row. In so doing, we were guided by the desire to make peace with our neighbours, all of which are members of the League of Arab States.

Today, significant strides have been taken on the Israeli-Palestinian track and we see new hope for progress on the Syrian track as well. The peace process, which began in Madrid in 1991, was after all based on two tracks: the bilateral tracks between Israel and its neighbours and the multilateral tracks. We call upon our neighbours to seize the opportunity to quickly resume the multilateral tracks, lest we lose the diplomatic momentum of the present day and the chance to bring the fruits of peace to our peoples. Hesitation and preconditions serve no one; face-to-face dialogue and cooperation are in the interest of all parties in the region.

Israel supports cooperation between the United Nations and various regional organizations, including the League of Arab States. Indeed, such cooperation is based on provisions of the United Nations Charter. It is

regrettable that Israel alone remains excluded from the regional group fitting its geographic location, owing to the political objections of some Member States. Israel calls upon the members of the League of Arab States to honour Israel's equal right to participate in the Group of Asian States. The fact that Israel alone is still denied membership in any regional group directly contradicts the United Nations declared commitment to the sovereign equality of Member States, enshrined in the Charter.

This is the first resolution on an issue related to the Middle East to be adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We are pleased that the resolution was adopted by consensus.

We would therefore — especially after listening to the previous speaker — take this opportunity to recommend that all parties to the peace process exercise restraint both in the language of resolutions to be submitted and in all related statements. We cannot build confidence in the Middle East by engaging in polemical debates in New York. The peace process is by its nature bilateral between the parties and inflammatory rhetoric offered in international forums surely belongs to another era.

We regret having to echo a plea so similar to last year's. This is due to the failure of this forum to reflect substantive changes on the ground. We look forward to a day when the climate in the United Nations will catch up with the fact that a genuine peace process has been launched and that all sides have been moving towards progress and reconciliation.

By resolving today to promote, in word and in deed, an atmosphere of cooperation and growth in the region, the nations involved in the peace process can transform today's hope into tomorrow's reality. Let us hope they do not miss this historic opportunity.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 26?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 171

Observer status for the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/54/L.15)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Angola to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.15.

Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola): On 7 October the General Committee acceded to the request made by the Portuguese-speaking countries that are United Nations Members to include a new item on the General Assembly's agenda at this session on the granting of observer status to the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP).

Today I take the floor on behalf of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe, in my capacity as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the CPLP, to propose to this body the adoption of draft resolution A/54/L.15, which invites the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to implement that decision.

In document A/54/232, of 14 September 1999, an explanatory memorandum was circulated that describes the history of the CPLP since its establishment on 17 July 1996 as an intergovernmental body of Portuguese-speaking countries to provide a response to the aspirations and appeals of 200 million people who consider the Portuguese language not only a means of communication, but also a historical and a common heritage nurtured by their friendly relation throughout the centuries.

The Community, created by the heads of State and Government of the seven Portuguese-speaking countries, is determined to achieve the following goals: to contribute to the reinforcement of human ties, solidarity and brotherhood among all people for whom the Portuguese language is one of the pillars of their identity; to encourage the dissemination and the enrichment of the Portuguese language; to enhance the cultural exchange and dissemination of intellectual and artistic creation within the framework of the Portuguese language; to endeavour to establish in certain member countries concrete forms of cooperation between the Portuguese

language and other national languages in the field of research and enhancement; to widen the cooperation among member countries in the field of political and diplomatic concerted action, particularly within the framework of international organizations, so as to give ever greater expression of their common interests and needs within the international community; to develop economic and entrepreneurial cooperation among member countries; and to mobilize internal and external efforts and resources aimed at assisting in reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, as well as humanitarian aid and emergency actions in member countries.

The CPLP also has among its objectives the promotion of cooperation in the following areas: the preservation of the environment; the protection of human rights, including the rights of children; strengthening of the social and economic condition of women; and the eradication of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

The CPLP is very open with regard to national diversity and cultural richness among its member States, which also belong to a multitude of other regional and multilateral bodies. Some of our countries are also members of the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Commonwealth and the International Organization of La Francophonie. We ardently desire that at the dawn of the next millennium, East Timor will join our Community as an independent Asian country, well integrated into its own regional neighbourhood.

Aware of the cultural reality that an identity of their own confers upon its members, the CPLP is also meant to be a bridge among the different geographical areas where its member States lie. By forming an association, they wish to promote peace, democracy, the rule of law, development, social justice and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and for the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. In that way, they concur with the promotion of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Since its inception, the CPLP has sought to cooperate efficiently and constructively with the United Nations and other relevant regional and subregional organizations. This has been the case in the search for solutions to the war in Angola, in the recent crisis in Guinea-Bissau and in the process of self-determination of East Timor. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, it should be noted that the concerted action between the CPLP and the Economic Community of West African States contributed much to the re-establishment of peace in that member country. The CPLP took part in the round table sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme aimed at coordinating the much-needed assistance for the rehabilitation process in Guinea-Bissau. The CPLP is also taking the necessary steps to cooperate in the reconstruction of East Timor.

Recognizing the benefits that would stem from a closer relationship with the United Nations, the Council of Ministers of the CPLP decided, at their meeting of July 1998, held in Praia, Cape Verde, that the Community would take the necessary steps in order to be granted observer status in the General Assembly. It is the hope of the seven member States of the CPLP that the General Assembly will transform our endeavour into reality by adopting draft resolution A/54/L.15.

I would like to announce the additional sponsors of the draft resolution: Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.15.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.15?

Draft resolution A/54/L.15 was adopted (resolution 54/10).

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Soares (Brazil): I have the privilege of expressing the appreciation of the seven member States of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) — Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe — to the other 181 Members of the United Nations for accepting the request to grant our Community observer status at the General Assembly.

The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries is not foreign to this Hall. Two years ago, on United Nations Day, three Portuguese-language music stars — Tito Paris of Cape Verde, Dulce Pontes of Portugal and Carlinhos Brown of Brazil — presented a show on behalf of the CPLP. On that occasion, the President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, sent a message stating that

the CPLP was to be seen as an extension of the international personality of its seven member nations, which bring their shared historical heritage into the present in the form of joint political action and a quest for cooperation.

Bringing together peoples from Africa, America, Europe and soon Asia, our Community is inspired by democratic principles. As the Permanent Representative of Angola stated, the CPLP statutes reaffirm the ideals of universal cooperation expressed in the San Francisco Charter. Hence, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries was constituted in the light of the values of peace, democracy, rule of law, human rights, development and social justice, bearing in mind the principles of sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their territorial integrity.

Not only do the main goals of CPLP share the purposes of the United Nations Charter, but the values that constitute the framework of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries are also consistent with the principles of this universal Organization.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 171?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.